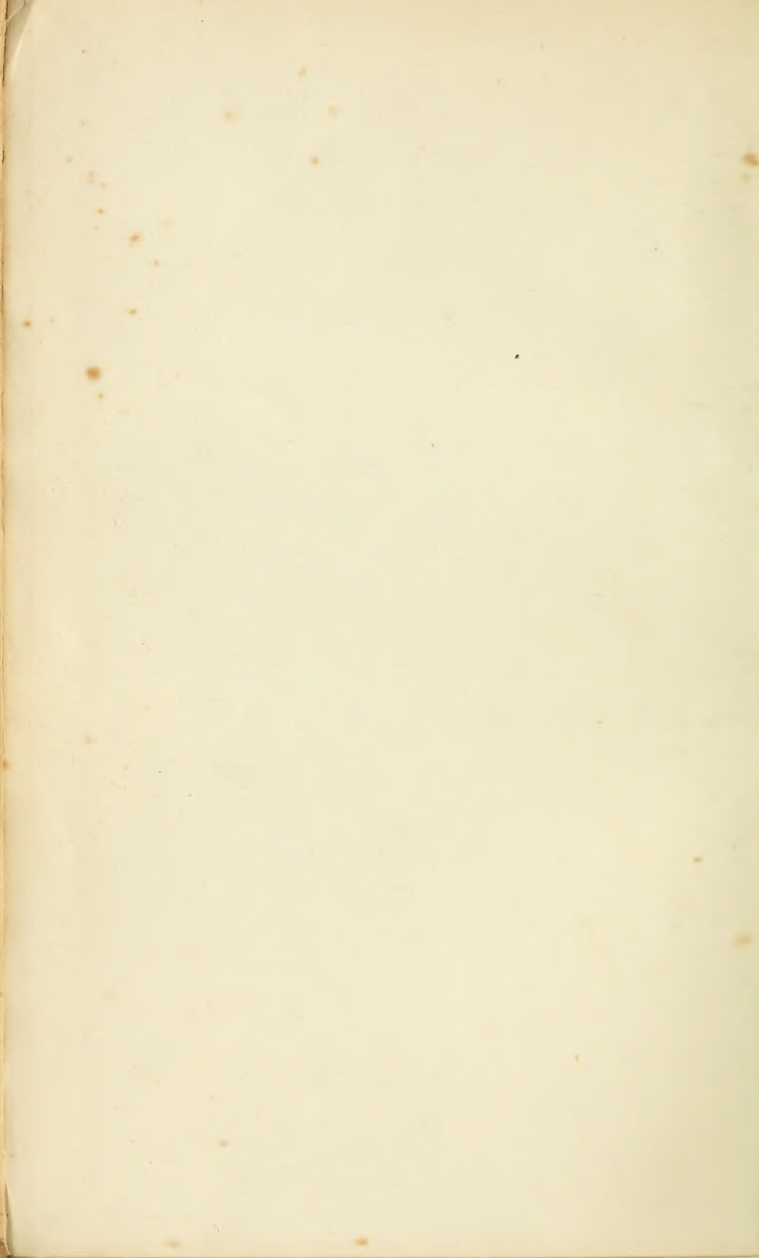
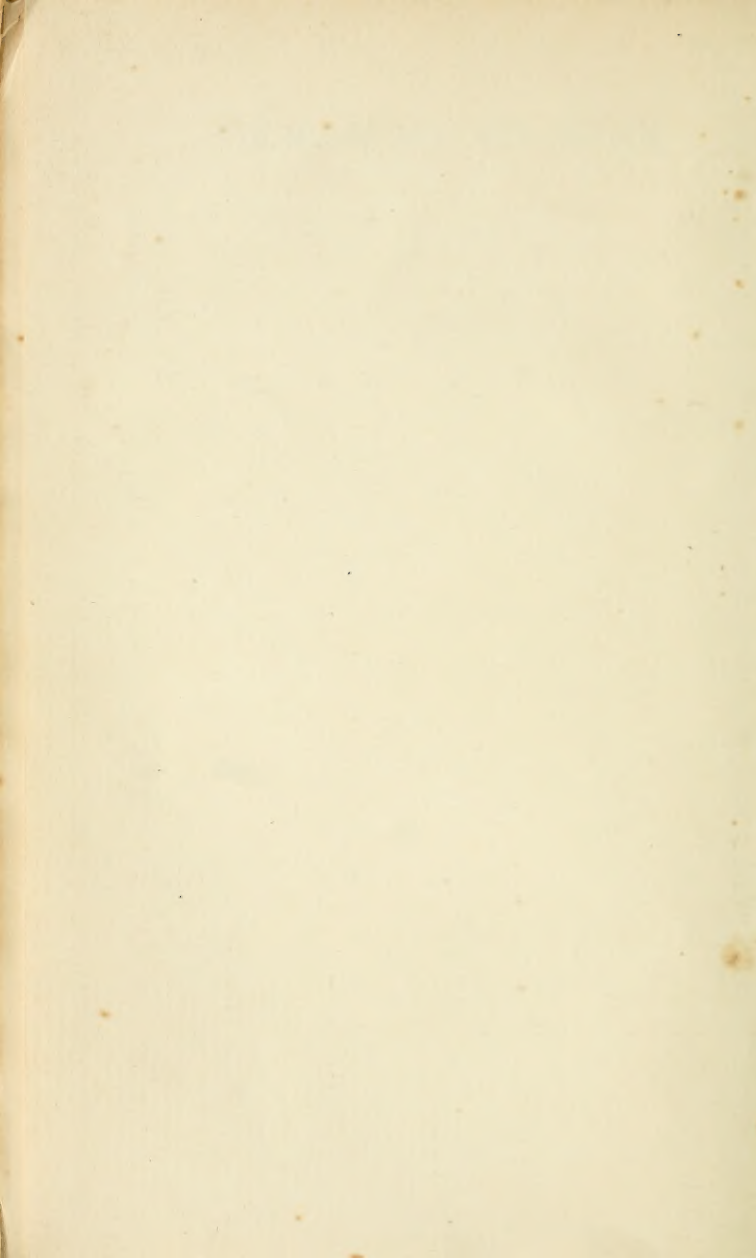


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# JOHN OF DAMASCUS



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# JOHN OF DAMASCUS

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By DOUGLAS AINSLIE

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*THIRD EDITION REVISED AND ENLARGED*

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LONDON : AT THE UNICORN  
7 CECIL COURT, W.C. MDCCCCIII

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TO  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR MOUNTSTUART  
ELPHINSTONE GRANT DUFF, G.C.S.I., F.R.S.  
THIS POEM IS AFFECTIONATELY AND  
ADMIRINGLY DEDICATED  
BY HIS NEPHEW  
THE AUTHOR



SEP 14 1937

10017

## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

IT is hoped that no want of harmony will be found in this the third edition of *John of Damascus*. The poem in its present form was always in the mind of the author, and the difficulties incidental to the publication of so long a poem alone prevented *John of Damascus* from stretching his limbs.

The proem, 'Worshipper of the Sun and Moon,' varies slightly from the versions of the first and second editions, and from the version given in the *Victorian Anthology*.

The author wishes to thank His Highness the Aga Khan for various luminous remarks let fall in conversation which have led him, he hopes, to a finer and more genuine enthusiasm for Islam than he felt when writing the first version. The author's thanks are also due to his friend Professor Browne, of Pembroke College, Cambridge, for permission to copy from the manuscript of his *History of Persian Literature* (since published) certain details as to the Ommyad dynasty which have been made use of in the narrative of the masked prophet of Persia.

At the request of many readers of the earlier editions, arguments have been inserted which the

author trusts may serve as a guide to those who found a difficulty in following the thread of the narrative. The white, yellow, and green ribbons, symbolising respectively Christianity, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism, may also be of some service.

*Delgaty Castle, Aberdeenshire.*

*December, 1902,*

*"Worshipper of the Sun and Moon  
and the evening star this people was,  
before we brought the priceless boon  
and held before its eyes the Cross."*

*Thus speak the priests of every creed  
and the Old Gods perish as is due,  
and the New triumph, till indeed  
these new are old and men make new.  
But always as the old creed wanes,  
her votaries will linger yet,  
and though Lord Christ in Heaven reigns  
Queen Venus they will not forget.  
See them steal forth at still of eve,  
alert while all the world is sleeping ;  
see the stained altar, see them weave  
her mystic wreaths while she is peeping  
through the pale cloud. Just so one day  
the tale of Christ a tale of Fairy  
to the new men will seem when they  
with Venus shall have placed our Mary  
among the myths of old : they smile  
handling the crown of thorns ; for them  
the Christian legend will beguile  
an idle hour, the azure hem  
of Mary's robe, the Cherubim,  
the glistening glories of the sainted  
are but old fancies growing dim  
as fade the marvels Vinci painted.*

*Thus of the world in man's first youth ;  
he wanders on until arrested*



*he stands before the temple Truth  
built on the hill-top olive-crested.  
He kneels, and glowing there between  
the white slim columns of her shrine ;  
perfect, implacable, serene,  
dawns upon him the queen divine.  
Then says the world : " An empty shell  
for the true goddess you have taken ;  
long ages past the old faith fell  
and the marble temple was forsaken ;  
you are a man now, and behold  
these things are really worth the scheming :  
science and power and art and gold  
and women fairer than your dreaming."  
And as the pagan with the priest  
so manhood spurns his boyhood's god,  
vowing he cares nor knows the least  
where winds the hilly path he trod.  
But when the field of youth is mown  
and earlier his evening closes,  
Lo ! he steals trembling forth alone  
to deck the scornèd shrine with roses,  
and weeping in the sacred place,  
see him recant his blasphemies :  
iron-grey his hair and in his face  
engraven the world's miseries.*

*O goddess, grant him kneeling here  
pilgrim and penitent of youth,  
vision ineffable to appear—  
Art and Religion, Love and Truth.*

# PART I

## JOHN OF DAMASCUS

### ARGUMENT

*THE subject proposed—the monastery of Mar Sabas described—the dirge of John Mansour, the Damascene—Damascus, its Christian and Mohammedan epochs—Sergius, father of John of Damascus, one of the Christian servants of the Mohammedan Kaliphs—Sergius delivers a Christian monk, Cosmas, from slavery—Cosmas becomes the teacher of John Mansour, afterwards known to the Christian world as John of Damascus—John succeeds his father Sergius—John is made chief minister—Leo, the Isaurian Emperor of the East, issues the edicts against the worship of the Trinity by means of images or pictures—John of Damascus issues a defence of images, and violently opposes the ecclesiastical policy of Leo—Leo causes a letter to be forged purporting to have been sent to him by John of Damascus—this letter contains treasonous proposals, and is sent to the Kaliph—the Kaliph is deceived—John Mansour is punished—a miracle performed by the Blessed Virgin herself—John Mansour retires to the monastery of Mar Sabas—he submits to the severe rule of monk Isumbrand—he breaks one of its clauses by composing the dirge quoted at the beginning of the poem—he is sent to Damascus on foot as penance—he is recognised by Al Zobeir, the Mohammedan, his successor as Chief Minister—Al Zobeir entertains him—John of Damascus offers to tell the story of the Christian saints Barlaam and Joasaph.*



Now who with me will leave for a while  
this age of Mammon, vulgar, vile,  
and with my hand for guide in his  
glide back the sleeping centuries?  
Come, loose thy hold of all thy cares  
and all thy pleasures, merely snares  
to stay the mind that should be free.  
Time, what is time and what are we,  
and wherefore chained to the hours that be?  
Come, shake thy golden locks, dear friend,  
and shaking, through thy being send  
a message saying: "This the day  
I step a thousand years away  
and pass a thousand leagues to the land  
where, as though cradled in the sand,  
two great religions of the world  
first waxed and spread, till they enfurled  
more than a half humanity:"  
So come with me to Palestine,  
where 'twixt Damascus and divine  
Jerusalem our stay will be;  
in the valley of Kidron, near the shore  
of the lake which the very birds abhor,  
sinking with shivering wings from the air,  
which is heavy with poison everywhere,  
to float quite dead upon those waves  
await for them like crystal graves—  
the waves of the Lake Asphaltites,  
the green, salt waves of the Dead Sea.  
But high on the rocks above us see,  
placed like an eagle's eyrie, is  
the Laura of the Mar Sabas,  
of which that saint the founder was.  
To-day is but as yesterday,  
and a thousand years as they pass away

scarce furrow once the brow of the hill,  
and scarce the brooding valley fill  
with any noticeable change;  
as though this special point of the earth  
did garner thoughts beyond the range  
of time and space, of death and birth.  
'Twas hither that Saint Sabas fled  
for refuge in the "Valley of Fire"  
from the worse pangs of wild desire,  
and here the monk's true life he led.  
But not of him do we stay to tell,  
nor of the lion who loved him well,  
and shared awhile his rocky cell;  
and hardly may swallow or song alight  
by those high caves, where dwelt St. John,  
Arcadius, Xenophon, brethren three,  
far beyond hearing yet each in sight;  
and all their lives, when the first sun shone,  
waved greetings each for the day to be,  
silent for ever across the abyss:  
we flit, for we may not hover o'er this,  
and haste to the time when the Laura stood,  
a power for evil and for good,  
like all extreme that is.

Twin towers and mighty buttresses,  
domes, battlements, and staircases,  
support the building as it leans  
toward the dismal, deep ravines  
which serve the Kidron for a bed;  
and Nature all around is dead,  
save for the golden grackle's cry  
or the wolf's howl; no single flower  
is there to shadow hour by hour  
the slow sun's progress over the sky:  
white cliffs and yellow, all is dead  
without, within, save overhead

sad singing, hark ! for 'tis a dirge  
rises and falls like the sea's surge :—

*Take the last kiss, the last for ever,  
you and your friend to-day must sever—  
he passeth onward to the tomb ;  
farewell he bids to earthly pleasure,  
to pains of earth farewell for ever ;  
but render thanks amid your gloom,  
he hath of all good things the best,  
he passeth to eternal rest.*

*Take the last kiss, the last for ever.  
Lo ! the last word of life is spoken,  
the golden vessel lieth broken ;  
forth from her tabernacle flown  
wingeth the soul her way alone.*

*Take the last kiss, the last for ever.  
What is our life ? a fading flower ;  
the dewdrops of the dawning hour  
pass not more speedily away.*

*Take the last kiss, the last for ever.  
Come gaze upon the tombs to-day  
where youth and beauty withered lie  
as grass of summer utterly.*

*Take the last kiss, the last for ever.  
So while our eyes with tears grow dim,  
come let us plead to Christ for him,  
and weeping o'er the dead together  
take the last kiss, the last for ever.*

So ends the singing ye know so well,  
and 'tis of the poet that I would tell,  
of John Mansour the Damascene,  
Chrysoroas, " he of the golden flow,"  
true poet, if saint has ever been,  
and saint as true as poet, I ween ;

this by God's help I'll show.  
But first, sweet lady, I'd crave your grace  
to grant me leave for a moment's space—  
(nay, blind me not with thy radiant face)—  
crave freedom for rhyme that rings  
true to itself and sighs or sings ;  
now free, now prisoned in the throats  
of birds who careless give their notes,  
according to a harmony  
that in the listener first must be.  
Now, having told of the dirge and the sea,  
spread wings again and pass with me  
northward and backward to the place  
where John the Doctor of Christian Art  
loved, lived, and suffered a little space,  
ere for his great and bleeding heart  
he found true solace in life apart  
from the suns and the storms of history,  
on these bare cliffs, by this Dead Sea.  
Through seven miles of forest fair  
Damascus lies and drinks her fill  
of those cold torrents from the hill,  
Barrada, Phege ; streams that were  
famous ere in her yellow glass  
first peered the seven-crowned infant Rome  
new crept from out her wolfish womb.  
Heroes and kings, she has seen all pass,  
Damascus City of Pomegranates,  
City of Gardens, and now, though she  
is older far than all towns that be,  
even yet through her carven gates  
life ebbs, life flows ; no memories climb  
upward to that dim point of time  
when Uz the first foundations laid ;  
nor yet shall we stay our flight to tell  
of Abraham nor of Israel,



of Naaman nor his maid :  
nor yet may we hover over the day  
Tiglath-Pileser led away  
to Kir the Damascenes ;  
and here the end of her youth we see  
when the rest of the world began to be,  
an end of the Bible scenes.  
Time waxed, time waned, kings went, kings came,  
and Alexander's mighty name  
split into fragments like a gem,  
and the crowd struggles and gathers them ;  
but always upon the crest of time  
Damascus sailed, and she always came  
equal with things sublime.  
City of Pomegranates, come tell  
what thine old stones must know so well ;  
how looked young Pompey as he rode  
to choose some palace for abode  
along the street called Straight ?—  
He who brought Syria under the sway  
of the Roman babe of yesterday ?—  
“ Hardly he deigned to turn aside  
the head that won the world to bride,  
crisp-curved, supreme, elate.  
He left me by the eastern gate,  
he rode to rend the veil,  
and face to face with Israel's God  
not his the gaze to quail.”  
But mightier steps than his have trod  
these ancient stones, and the breach in the wall  
still shews where he who was Saul and was Paul  
must fly for his mission's sake.  
(Refounder of the Christian world,  
who in your puissant grasp did take  
the soft and soothing gospel furled  
in the seamless robe, did crush and turn

that flower-strown script to fires that burn,  
 melt and refashion and make stern,  
 as a wrought gate of pierced iron,  
 the faith which doth our world environ.  
 Ah, carven gates, through which we peer  
 to count the crowns the Pontiffs wear,  
 circlewise sitting backward there  
 to guard the key which lies them near,  
 ruddy with rust, and blood-flecks stain  
 the lock our fingers try in vain !  
 Methinks you melt again, and lo  
 those iron flowers Paul carved do flow  
 back to the daisy, and a child  
 leads back the Lamb, from us beguiled.)  
 Five hundred years went gliding by,  
 and the Christians reigned when the old gods  
     waned,  
 till Heraclius tottered on his throne  
 in evil health, whose hand alone  
 might with the scimitared monster vie  
 which from the south is drawing nigh.  
 Columns of desert dust revolving  
 across the astonished earth reveal  
 Mohammad, central column of all,  
 man's sins in the one God absolving,  
 if but he lose his life in arms :  
 " Think not of battle's grievous harms —  
 all wounds in Paradise will heal  
 tended by houris fair and tall,  
 unknown of man or of any jinn."  
 " I am the tower where wisdom dwells,  
 Ali the gate to enter in :"  
 Thus spake the Prophet, but fate spells  
 a different destiny, and the sword  
 of Syria, Amrou's subtle tongue,  
 the pierced Koran and the vile fraud

of the judgment given, the empire wrung  
 from the Bayard<sup>1</sup> of Islam, and the Plain  
 drank of his grandchild's blood, Hosein.  
 Khalid, Obeidah, who can stay?  
 Werdan, Heraclius turned to clay?—  
 Damascus falls, and the white and the green  
 wave from the time-worn walls, serene,  
 and the mule of Syria Muavia  
 Lord of all Islam governed here  
 from the City of Gardens, and the God  
 of Islam triumphed where Islam trod.  
 Westward to Egypt, eastward ho,  
 borne on the winds the sons of the sand  
 bear death or the faith wherever they go;  
 scimitar drawn and the Book in hand,  
 they blot the boundaries of the land  
 where Tigris and Euphrates flow,  
 and the last of the Sassanides  
 must fall, a suppliant, on his knees.  
 Through palaces of Karmathian kings  
 the desert cloud its passage wings,  
 o'erwhelming all, and the Indian streams  
 must flicker back the scimitar's gleams;  
 Moultan, Ferghana, Samarcand,  
 Kashgar; and on the western land  
 as heavily lies Islam's hand,  
 even to Segelmessa, where  
 gnomes lay gold by the merchant's ware.  
 Thus Islam won and still doth keep,  
 nor like the whirling pillar of sand  
 falls with the wind nor sinks to sleep.

. . . . .  
 "Never before so splendid was  
 Our ancient city"; the fountains say,

<sup>1</sup> Ali.

as in the marble courts they play  
 and the white doves of peace do rove  
 from orange grove to orange grove.  
 Bright gleamed the Crescent, but still the Cross,  
 though dimmed and dinted, yet remained,  
 for what could the sons of the desert do  
 in a world so old, to them so new?  
 They sought the help of the sect disdained ;  
 and always the great Muavia placed  
 by his side at the council and the feast  
 some Christian whose wit and wisdom graced  
 and tempered the Arab fire at least.  
 Then the day came that he must die,  
 and in the Tomb of the Little Gate  
 Muavia sleeps, and by him lie  
 Mohammad's wives and he whose pages  
 carry his doings down the ages,  
 Ibn Asaker, and those that came  
 thereafter of the Ommyad name,  
 Walid and Hisham and Merwan,  
 fulfilled the use their sire began ;  
 on the horns of the Crescent shines the Cross ;  
 Akhtal, the Christian, robed in gold,  
 amazed Islam must behold  
 crowned " Kaliph's poet " since he was  
 best spokesman for the silent rose  
 which in Damascus garden blows.  
 And Walid, enraged at a verse that pricks  
 his pillowed pleasure, pierces and sticks  
 through with his arrows the Koran.  
 " For, ' Woe to the proud rebellious man,'  
 you cry ; well, wait till the Judgment day  
 and then call out to your Lord if you may  
 ' 'Twas Walid pierced me ; I said him, Nay.' "

" Scarce in His Father's bosom lies

Our Saviour Christ seven hundred year ;  
 scarce eighty since their prophet flies  
 with Israfil for charioteer,  
 when thus the pagans reappear,  
 and Walíd comes to flout and jeer,"  
 mused Sergius the Logothete,  
 as his mule bore him along the street  
 (this Sergius was a Christian,  
 yet served the Kaliph as Christians can).  
 Sudden the mule stops where a crowd  
 is chaffering long, is chaffering loud,  
 for a Christian monk, in the narrow space  
 ere the street becomes the market-place.  
 "What think you, friend, will the old monk grace  
 my harem's door?" says one ; "more sure  
 your garden as a rare manure."  
 This Sergius heard, and Cosmas saw  
 in his eye was pity, and hope once more  
 throbbed to his heart with the life-blood.  
 And, "Gracious lord," he cried in Greek,  
 "I am Cosmas monk, and I cannot speak  
 the Saracen speech, nor shew, as I would,  
 the treasures I bear from Sicily ;  
 for I am learned in all the lore  
 which came with the Christ and came before :  
 Plotinus, Porphyry live in me,  
 Plato is mine, and all the light  
 which gave to the world the Stagyríte."  
 Then Sergius answered him back in Greek :  
 "Old man, you need fear no more ;  
 for though you have lied, and the names you speak  
 be all your knowledge, I know how sore  
 on your frail limbs this iron's weight,  
 and sad as a slave-youth seems, not one  
 of all the sad sights under the sun  
 is sadder than age at odds with fate ;

but if truth you tell, you shall guide my son  
through all the mazes of Plato's school."  
Then Cosmas was unchained and led  
forth, and upon a sturdy mule  
his saviour placed him, and little was said  
as they passed beneath the archway cool ;  
for now well-nigh the monk was dead,  
scarce having slept since from his bed  
the Saracens dragged him, in Syracuse.  
But soon good fare and generous wine,  
and the smiles of Sergius and gentle use  
(these last twain, healers most divine),  
coaxed back the heart to work again,  
and drove the blood to the restless brain,  
and Sergius gently bade him tell  
of those wise Greeks he loved so well.  
Then Cosmas' eyes flashed bright, as he  
launched forth on that great history ;  
and Sergius hearkened as he told  
of those who in their thoughts were bold  
as ever mariner upon sea ;  
the admirals they of philosophy ;  
how first in the grey Greek morn of thought  
rose Heraclitus, and did show  
that nought remains and all things flow :  
"Not twice can you nor can any go  
over the same stream ;" this he taught.  
And how Parmenides said : "Not so,  
for thought and being are the same,  
and true things *are*, but the false *appear* ;  
and to *know* well is not to *dream*,  
and the one whole is pure and clear  
like a vast crystal colourless sphere  
at rest in the heavens ;"—and much more  
which teased the wit of Sergius sore ;  
so that he clapped his hands, and slaves

brought sherbet in golden bowls, and cream  
and store of roses, and shook staves  
with flapping arras so to seem  
as though a real wind did blow.  
But scarcely did Cosmas touch the bowl  
with eager lips on the overflow,  
for Zeno trembled in his soul.  
He would tell the truth, he would tell the whole,  
and prove to the noble logothete  
that the monk Cosmas was worth his meat.  
“Yea, Zeno and Parmenides”—  
went Cosmas on; but Sergius waves  
to a slim youth among his slaves,  
and “Zeno and Parmenides”—  
Cosmas begins again forlorn;  
but the hanging curtains are withdrawn,  
and, bowing lowly to the ground,  
then bounding with an antelope’s bound,  
a boy like budding April springs  
all youth upon them, and his arms  
round his old father’s neck he flings,  
triumphant in his boyhood’s charms.  
“My son, he is my only son,”  
cries Sergius, when at last he is free;  
“his mother left this only one  
to be a link ’twixt her and me.  
Is he not beautiful?—Just so  
the angels look, as to and fro  
they wing their way round Heaven’s throne,  
save that perchance their locks may glow  
with light that shines from God alone.  
But John’s hair is golden, and such eyes  
saw you ever on this side Paradise?”  
Old Cosmas smiled, and stroked the hair  
of the fair child, who had drawn near  
and gazed upon him without fear.



Then the monk gathered into heads  
 the wandering skein of ravelled threads,  
 and told how Zeno had undone,  
 had spun again, again unspun  
 all theories of identity ;  
 so that for him, you, I and he  
 are or are not indifferently.  
 He conjured up that day when all  
 the living wits of the world did meet  
 at the great Athenian festival :  
 here Zeno and Parmenides greet  
 our Plato's many-coloured mind,  
 and to all the elder sophist said,  
 Zeno, the younger, bowed his head :  
 " We move of course, but then we find  
 that we can only *say* we move  
 from point to point and at each point rest ;  
 for all these points are breast to breast ;  
 Achilles cannot catch the sloth,  
 the arrow that flies is motionless,  
 the falling tower may seem to move  
 as does my tongue, but none the less  
 the sage well knows how still are both."  
 And hence the monk to another sage  
 of ancient Greece drew near, and the child  
 by his kind eyes and speech beguiled,  
 approached and sat at the teacher's feet ;  
 whereat cried Sergius : " I engage  
 you Cosmas lead my son to greet  
 those lords of thought, and since 'tis meet  
 that a freeman teach my son the Greek,  
 straightway I will the Kaliph seek,  
 and ask for you your liberty."  
 Then Sergius rose and " Speedily  
 I come again," he cried, and as  
 the curtains of the portal fell

upon the father, 'gan to tell  
the monk of dim Pythagoras.  
Meeting of night and day, I ween :  
Cosmas in his dark cloak, and the child,  
like a cherub down from heaven beguiled,  
and above their heads the deep dark green  
of the orange trees and the palms in rows,  
and the long-stretching even lines  
of the marble steps and the wheeling crows  
against heaven's blue depths overhead.  
And hardly the child knows, but divines  
the old dim creed, that none are dead,  
but passed from one form to another,  
and each by the last life he led  
punished or blessèd in some other ;  
and how we flit from star to star,  
and have known all, but nought abides,  
as the sand washed by the great tides ;  
and hence the good monk wandered far.  
Now Sergius returns, and liberty  
upbeartheth Cosmas on her wings.  
But still with the child he stands, while he  
swears that until his last day brings  
for him farewell to all earthly things,  
true to his duties he will be,  
and all he knows of the ancient school,  
and all the Christian too, will lay  
before the bright-eyed boy, nor stay  
till all his doubts are cleared away  
and his life fixed in the Christian rule,  
“ for always in the best of the Greek  
we hear the coming Saviour speak.”  
The pact was made, and Cosmas stayed,  
and with a mighty love of the truth  
the old monk taught the willing youth.  
And Cosmas found that Athena's light

glowed in John's eyes, so blue so bright ;  
for all he taught was stored away  
beneath the forehead's gold-curled rings ;  
nor could aught crabbed diction stay  
the boy's thirst to drink up the springs  
which flow from distant Athens there  
where the name of Christ makes clear the air.  
Diophantus and the Ptolemies,  
algebra and geometry,  
and the gold dust of truth that lies  
where men have striven hard to see :  
but most of all Pythagoras  
among the ancient sages was  
that one whose vivid eagle sight  
Cosmas delighted to reveal  
in glimpses of transcendent light  
to the bright boy whose will could feel  
and memory seize upon a thought  
vaster as yet than could be brought  
within full conscience of the brain.  
Thus several years they dwelt together  
careless almost of the outside weather—  
scarce knowing what vizier might reign  
for a moment in the Kaliph's train,  
till the day came that Cosmas died.  
Full twenty hours did John abide  
by the dead semblance of his friend ;  
then, for he knew his grief could lend  
no joy to the spirit passed away,  
John harkened to his father's prayer,  
and thenceforth followed everywhere  
the business of the logothete,  
and oft-times passed nigh half the day  
copying and counting, making neat  
columns of figures, and the crowd  
of dusty things which like a cloud

hang round the central pulse of power.  
 Thus happened it that oft the son  
 filled the fair place his sire had won,  
 passed with the Kaliph many an hour,  
 and the little John grew John Mansour ;  
 and none at the court was known so sure  
 alike in lesser things as great.  
 Then clanged again the bell of fate,  
 and Sergius followed on the way  
 which Cosmas took five years before.  
 And Mansour sorrowed long and sore  
 for the father he should see no more.  
 But grief must cease, and tears must stay,  
 ere the staff gripped in willing hand  
 will help the traveller to the land.  
 Soon came word from the Kaliph's grace  
 that he should fill a higher place  
 than ever Christian filled before :  
 Mansour was named chief councillor.  
 And now the straining reins of power  
 lay in John's hand, for the Kaliph knew  
 that the Christian John was firm and true  
 as Sergius in the years gone by.  
 " If this be so, then what care I  
 if he worship Christ as the deity  
 equal with Allah, and Miriam,<sup>1</sup>  
 sister of Moses, child of Imram,  
 place with his god in Paradise.  
 For certain God Mansour will damn,  
 yet *now* is the Christian witty and wise  
 and true to *me*, though he worship lies."  
 Thus all was well till Leo roared  
 against the worship of the Lord  
 in form of picture, shrine or saint :  
 " God is no idol daubed with paint."

<sup>1</sup> Virgin Mary.

Such speech Mansour would not endure  
against the image and semblance fair  
of God made beautiful everywhere ;  
so in his hand he took the pen,  
and in words of splendour and eloquence  
bade the Christian world resist his power  
who would destroy the gracious presence  
of God made visible to men.

Then waxed Mansour from hour to hour ;  
then raged the Emperor in his heart,  
and subtly, since he did not dare  
slay John while in the Kaliph's care,  
commands his scribes with all their art  
a semblance of John's script prepare ;  
wherein he seems to sign away  
allegiance to his Saracen Lord.

" Weak is the Saracen guard,"—thus ran  
the lying script,—“ and on a day  
if so you will it, shall your sword  
into Damascus find a way :  
five hundred men at arms I can  
lead secretly within the walls :  
and with Walid his empire falls.”

Thus and much more for many a page  
ran the epistle, that he might know  
Mansour for traitor and for foe.

Then fell the Kaliph in a rage,  
and ere the first wild gust was spent  
called for Mansour, who all in vain  
pleaded the forgery, and revealed  
the hatred in the script concealed,  
which planned his ruin ; but “ Not again  
will the Kaliph in the ambush fall :  
John wrote the treason, and the hand  
which did the deed the brain has planned  
must perish, perish also all

the power and place he once did own."

The deed was done, and John alone  
prayed to the Virgin that the pain  
might cease and the arm come whole again.

Then sick at heart, of praying tired,  
John fell to sleep, and dreamed of her  
to whom but now he had raised his prayer.  
And as he dreamed there came, attired  
in blue cœrulean, on a cloud,  
which as she went did move with her,  
compassed with heavenly light about,  
and cherubs flitting round her head,  
the Mother of Christ, and sweetly said :

    " John, your prayer is heard,  
    John, your arm is healed,  
    John, in light revealed,  
    See me, hear the word."

Then John awakened from his sleep,  
and found his arm whole as before  
the cruel sword in his blood did steep,  
save where a thin red circle bore  
one witness to the Faith the more.  
Full soon the Kaliph cries again :  
" Where is Mansour ? Must Islam rue  
his punishment since none of you  
can match the subtle Christian's brain ?  
Go bring the traitor to our view."  
So John was brought, and the Kaliph saw  
his arm as whole as it was before.  
Then wild indeed was the Moslem's rage,  
and " What," he cried, " do my slaves engage  
to spare the punishment when due ?  
Go fetch the soldier who should hew  
the right arm off as his shall too."

They led him in, and when he saw  
John's arm come whole, he fell on the floor,  
and cried with a mighty voice : " Some jinn  
hath compact with this man of sin ;  
I swear, most noble lord, with a blow  
Mansour his arm fell off, and I know  
the place exact where I struck, can show " -  
but here John bared his arm, and the rim  
revealed the miracle wrought on him.  
Then the Kaliph turned him and hid his face  
and communed with his soul a space.  
At length he said : " To you, Mansour,  
my servant, trusty, tried and sure ;  
hereby I grant the wealth I took,  
and all the lands : nor shall I brook  
again the lies that any send  
against my servant, councillor, friend ;  
yea if any dare to speak one word  
against Mansour, that man hath heard  
his own death sentence in his lies,  
and ere their echo cease he dies.  
John Mansour, you I hereby raise  
with me above all blame or praise  
of this my court ; and I pray of you  
pardon for hasty action due  
to the vile scheming of a foe.  
Hear all the world : I will it so."  
Then John bowed low before the throne,  
and thanked the Kaliph for justice done :  
" But none of the splendours you offer me, none  
can I accept, though far beyond  
the worth of one who was overfond  
of this world's empty bauble show.  
Now at your hands, O gracious lord,  
one boon I crave : that I may retire  
to the Laura by the Kidron's flow



Mar Saba in the Valley of Fire,  
where I may worship and record  
the sweet descending vision of Love  
which has healed me here in anguish dire—  
Mary the Mother from above.”

Then the Kaliph rose from his silver throne,  
and came to the place where stood St. John,  
and drawing a gold chain from his neck,  
alive with ruby and chalcedon,  
threw it the saint's bent neck upon,  
and cried : “ O friend, you can little reck  
how great my love and how great my loss,  
if thus, as you say, you yet will cross  
my purpose of all things good for you.  
But as you will, so shall you do.

Only I ask if again you see  
the vision of Miriam, plead for me.”

Then the saint in short but earnest speech  
talked with the Kaliph of things of state,  
and bade farewell to his friends, and each  
received a share of his new-found wealth,  
and joyfully penniless, more great  
than ever before, by the eastern gate,  
in a monk's robe, St. John, by stealth  
crept out at night to join the choir  
of the monks who serve in the Valley of Fire.

“ Who knocks thus deep in the night below ?

Be thou friend or be thou foe,  
depart, depart in peace,” cried one,  
as at the postern knocked St. John.

“ Fear not at all, a friend am I,  
John of Damascus, come to crave  
such succour as your monks vouchsafe  
in the name of Christ and Charity ;  
therefore descend.” When the watcher heard

the name of the traveller, soon was stirred  
 in every part that place of stone,  
 as in a church at the first deep tone  
 of the organ lesser thoughts must fly,  
 and our thoughts soar with the sound on high.  
 The Abbot opened to St. John,  
 and all alike the monks would strive  
 to serve the greatest saint alive  
 (for so they held him who did dare  
 beard Leo in his lion's lair),  
 to serve an it were but a menial part  
 for the "Doctor of the Christian Art."  
 But the more they worshipped at his feet,  
 the more John craved for the discipline  
 which yet he lacked ere he could win  
 his way to the side of the Paraclete.  
 But none of the monks would undertake  
 such a task as the ruling of the man  
 who, ere his monk's life even began,  
 had braved an emperor on his throne,  
 had ruled o'er Islam as his own,  
 for whose sweet, ardent sufferings' sake  
 Mary the Mother of God came down,  
 all radiant in her pale blue gown,  
 and spake with him and healed his wound;  
 "And you may see the very rim  
 where her gentle fingers tended him,  
 left as a sign when his arm came sound."  
 Now who would dare as much as even  
 dispute with one who hath been in Heaven?  
 much less by narrow monkish rule  
 presume to keep a saint in school?  
 Then John, as the throng of monks stood near,  
 and all would serve, but none command,  
 asked if the Laura all were here?  
 Then one made answer: "Isumbrand,

old and decrepid, dwells alone,  
nor ever leaves his cell of stone.”  
“Pray bring me to him,” said St. John.  
So upward from terrace to terrace they climb,  
saint and monks in a thin brown line,  
and at length on the topmost ridge they stand,  
panting for breath, and “Isumbrand”  
cries one and raps at the closed cell door.  
“Enter by Christ and by Mary’s grace,”  
answers the old monk’s voice within  
(and always he knelt and muttered o’er  
the prayer that should purge his soul of sin—  
some old sin done when the wrinkled face  
was bright as the glow of his silver shield,  
and the wild blood hummed and the will must yield).  
Then John drew near and bowed him low,  
and the brother monks retired below.  
John said : “Perchance you have heard my name,  
known well enough in the world, till I came  
to free my soul of its thousand sins  
here where the chastened spirit wins  
its heavenly way by penance due ;  
obedience and those other laws,  
made for the weal of him who adores  
Christ and his rule ; I pray of you  
to guide me sternly, Isumbrand,  
for here a sinful monk I stand,  
and cry in vain for firm control :  
those others all would kiss my hand,  
and kissing damn my ruined soul.  
Oh ! issue but a firm command,  
and as your slave in Christ I toil,  
and by your help my soul assoil.”  
Then John fell down and thanked the Lord  
who at length had heard his prayer ;  
and when he arose the aged monk

was standing waiting there.  
 And, "Thou shalt utter not one word,  
 thou of the golden flow  
 of speech and pen, and the pleasure drunk  
 from the eyes and the listening mouths of men,  
 charmed in thy puissant presence and sunk,  
 henceforth thou shalt never know.  
 But thou shalt pray in penitence  
 for thy dead deadly sins,  
 and when the moon beams and the world dreams  
 not then shalt thou rest, not then,  
 but by vigil and prayer shalt aye mount the stair  
 which heavenward leadeth hence.  
 And if these rules thou disobey,  
 from my cell thou shalt be expelled straightway."  
 "Good is not good unless well done,"  
 said John (and sure never beneath the sun,  
 arrayed against the power of night,  
 loomed brighter the legions of the light.  
 Great councillor with the winged crown  
 of power and the violet crown  
 of empery in the world of words,  
 these and the rest he will hurl them down  
 those rugged rocks, aye let them drown  
 where fall the very passing birds :  
 in the salt waves of the Dead Sea).  
 Thus and thus for many a day  
 works and strives the saint alway :  
 works at vile tasks, and never a word  
 through the bars of his golden<sup>1</sup> lips is heard ;  
 until the day when Thomas died ;  
 him the monks loved (and well betide  
 his soul which doth with God abide).  
 The monks they loved him very well,  
 and all that night and that day could tell

<sup>1</sup> Chrysoroas.

no other tale than the things he said,  
and the things that had pleased their brother dead.  
Now the fame of John as a poet came  
wafted with him like tongues of flame,  
and as they prayed and moaned full sore,  
one of them cried : " Since nevermore  
we may see our brother in the Lord,  
let us make a dirge, and let every word  
be cunningly placed, and let the whole  
rise like a temple to his soul.  
Then one said : " Nay, if he dared disobey  
once in the world the stern behest,  
our John the poet could make the best  
of any dirge, since to his rest  
St. Sabas passed among the blest."  
Therefore they came with suppliant airs  
to John as he toiled on the steep stone stairs,  
bearing the water for the cell  
of Isumbrand, and : " We know well  
your penance of silence, brother John ;  
but now is Thomas passed away,  
him whom we loved, and we would say  
how bright for us his presence shone,  
how dark these walls since he has gone ;  
but alas no skill in verse have we,  
so songless and dirgeless must he be  
laid to his rest to-morrow morn ;  
unless of your great love and wit  
some song of mourning shall be born,  
which shall meet his soul and fly with it.  
Ah ! grant our prayer, by the sacred eyes  
of Mary Mother, sweet and wise."  
Thus spoke the monk, and the others drew  
nearer the saint as he ceased to climb  
the steep stone steps, and thoughtful grew  
his eyes, and furrowed the brow sublime.

But he answered nothing at that time,  
save with a bow and a half smile,  
as upward again he 'gan to climb,  
musing, musing all the while.  
Soon images rose, and the very words  
swarmed all around like travelling birds  
that seek the beacon's golden light,  
which pierces through the gloom of night.  
Then suddenly to an end he brought  
his work, and the devious ways of thought  
shewed in his brain they would converge  
into the music of the dirge,  
which since his day men sing alway  
to speed the soul upon its way.  
That very noon they sung the same,  
and the sound of the singing rose like flame  
upward to the hard bare cell  
where Isumbrand with John did dwell.  
"What dirge is singing there below?"  
asks Isumbrand, as his fingers pleat  
the strands of the basket at his feet;  
"'tis strange the words I should not know,  
who came here sixty years ago.  
A noble dirge it is; I shall pray  
the Abbot, on my burial day  
an it please him, to let sing the same."  
Then over the face of the saint there came,  
first of his life, a blush of shame:  
"I wrote the dirge: be mine the blame."  
Isumbrand rose and spake no word,  
but stretched his arm and pointed down  
where yet the melody was heard  
The saint obeyed, and with bowed head  
passed out—and downward, ever down  
the rock-hewn staircase he must tread,  
thus "driven forth from Paradise."

Anguished he seeks the chapel gaunt,  
where the monks meet him, and his chaunt  
speeds always heavenward with the soul,  
first of the million souls that flies,  
buoyed on such wings to its last goal.  
The monks crowd round, and strive to soothe  
with compliments and phrases smooth  
Mansour in sorrow ; but aye he cries,  
“ I am driven forth from Paradise.”  
At last, one, bolder than the rest,  
saith : “ Brother, for your dirge’s sake  
which wafteth Thomas on his way,  
lo now I climb to the Laura’s crest,  
and with Isumbrand your peace will make,  
or at the least some solace lay  
on your sad soul if so I may.”  
His music ceased to cleave the air  
as the saint knelt in silent prayer,  
and the monks stood wondering wistfully  
what the mind of Isumbrand would be.  
Sudden the listeners’ heads are leaned.  
“ ’Tis James descending from Isumbrand,”  
circles the whisper, and now John may  
rise from the stones and cease to pray,  
for the final answer is on its way  
to the heart of gold from the heart of clay.  
He enters, and down the bare cold walls  
shivers the message that appals.  
“ John the sinner, so-called the saint,  
waxen will and heart all faint ;  
hear the penance which you must do  
ere Isumbrand will govern you.  
Some fifty leagues as I think divide  
John the vizier from the town of his pride  
twelve baskets lie complete in my cell,  
each worth a silver piece at the most.



Hence, then, vile sinner, fulfil thy boast ;  
pride of the pagan, poet of hell :  
speed to Damascus, and straightway sell  
each of the baskets at pieces three,  
nor till they are sold return to me."

Who stands there in the street called Straight,  
stands and calls like a figure of fate,  
" Baskets to sell ? " was ever seen  
a monk more foul, of more piteous mien ?  
Come tell us, monk, now who are you  
that thrive so ill 'neath the rule of the Jew ?  
" I come from the Laura upon the Hill,  
my name is John, and I here fulfil  
the righteous penance for my sin."  
" And what, sir monk, may that have been ? "  
" Good friend, an I told, you would not see  
the exceeding great enormity  
of the evil thing which I have done,  
but *these*, I must sell them every one,  
ere I may dare return again  
to purge the rest of my merited pain."  
He points to the baskets piled on high,  
and the crowd of idlers draws more nigh.  
Says one : " The price of that wicker crate ? "  
" Three pieces of silver." " Crazy pate !  
For two of copper I'd easily buy  
two better than yours ; but I see, you'd try  
to cozen the faithful, Christian hound ! "  
At this the loiterers gathered around,  
bronze-faced Syrians, and they stare  
at the monk as he stands by his high-priced ware.  
" And a copper piece is the most I would pay  
to see him and his baskets carried away,"  
shouts one, and his fellows jostle and laugh

at the bright-eyed monk as he leans on his staff,  
silent, serene ; though the cruel ray  
of the Syrian sun can find a way  
through the dark cloak dusty with many a mile :  
round him the rabble presses, vile.  
Sudden a shout, " Al Zobeir ! "  
All vanish melted away with fear,  
and alone he stands in the street called Straight,  
John Mansour, councillor of state,  
Friend of the Kaliph once, but now  
an humble monk, of strenuous brow.  
Slowly the white ass draws more near,  
whereon rides great Al Zobeir,  
who of high places holds the same  
as did Mansour ere yet his name  
rose to St. John, as smoke to flame.  
If he cast but a glance across the street  
perchance two old friends' eyes will meet.  
" Wherefore those baskets piled on high ?  
and who is the monk that stands them by ? "  
asks Zobeir, and his servants speed.  
" His name is John, and he comes "—but here  
John Mansour and Al Zobeir  
in one another's eyes had read  
sweet memory of the old days dead.  
Straight from his ass Al Zobeir leapt,  
and cried, " What strange tryst have you kept  
in this strange guise, with this strange ware ? "  
" I come from the Laura of St. Sabas,  
and thither again I hope to pass  
when all these baskets have been sold."  
" I buy them all, old friend ; here's gold.  
Now come " (he mounted down from his beast),  
" your vow's performed ; with me at least  
abide until the day be done,  
take rest and refuge from the sun.

You know my palace hid in the trees,  
 and the fountains and marble and seats of ease,  
 spread round the green, cool place.  
 How often have we pondered there  
 on things to come and things that were ;  
 but now, though you are far away—  
 you will yet set free for a friend one day.”  
 Bright smiled St. John through his weary dust,  
 and, “Come what may, we are bound to trust  
 old friends, though the world be new ;  
 so far away am I now from where  
 we dwelt in thought, that I hardly dare  
 tread again the path that I trod with you.  
 But you yourself are the best of the past,  
 and thoughts may change but the heart doth last ;  
 so fare I with you and will stay  
 till daybreak of the coming day ;  
 for, truth to tell, my head doth swim,  
 my senses all seem blurred and dim ;  
 and had you not come at need, dear friend,  
 my mission with my life had end.”  
 So now they pass upon their way,  
 and heads are turned and steps must stay  
 to see on foot the great Vizier  
 —on foot the great prince Zobeir—  
 and on his ass a strange foul friar,  
 for none did know him for Mansour,  
 who a while past with steps secure  
 trod these same stones, till the Kaliph's ire  
 drave him forth to the Valley of Fire  
 (so little may a face endure  
 in the vague memory of the throng,  
 which loves some much but loves none long).  
 Thus monk and infidel they pass  
 (friend and friend were now more near),  
 and the slaves run on some steps before,

and wide on its hinges swings the gate.

“What ho ! what ho !” cries Zobeir,  
“bring lemons quick and crystal glass  
full of red wine ; for a friend once more  
crosses my threshold, led by fate.”

Slaves come in swarms, and golden plates  
bear the best of the City of Pomegranates :  
but the saint finds strength to say them nay,  
who, crouching, fawning at each hand,  
offer the dainties of the land.

This Zobeir sees, and waves away  
the slavish questioners, and inquires  
what most his long-lost friend desires.

Deep in the cool green marble tank  
soothed and swathed the saint's limbs sank,  
and when he crossed again its rim,  
though late almost on his path to heaven,  
John knew that the world had need of him.

Then slaves bear in the softest wool  
that ever from wild hill sheep was riven,  
the finest linen of Sawad,  
and over all a garment cool  
chosen from the choicest Zobeir had.

These John is now obliged to don,  
for soiled and torn is his robe, and none  
so foul a garment would deign to wear  
as a guest in the house of Zobeir.

Thus thought the saint as he made his way  
through silken shades that hid the day  
out to the open court, where stands  
his noble host with outstretched hands.

And by St. George I think they were  
of the soaring sort as noble a pair  
as God has let live anywhere :

John with his glance all eagle and fire ;  
gentle and calm, Al Zobeir,

the lord of war, for now the best  
of all his nature owned was brought  
to focus in the single thought  
to greet his friend, to greet his guest.  
Then sat they at the board together,  
and the lesser guests let sit wherever  
they willed below, and the slaves brought meat,  
and both in the shade of the palms did eat.  
Then flashed the eyes of John once more,  
and he thanked the friend who had saved and  
tended  
the life which had that day well-nigh ended.  
Then they talked their time of friendship o'er.  
Meanwhile, to escape the heat of the sun,  
those who passed by came one by one  
and stood beneath the welcome shade  
which the wide-spreading palm-trees made,  
so that soon a numerous company  
filled every place where shade might be.  
"Mayhap," said the Vizier, "you can tell  
us something of your new strange life,  
since you left us all and went to dwell  
beyond the reach of mortal strife?"  
"Nay," said St. John, "my life has been  
unworthy, vile, and very mean.  
But how a Prince of India came  
to leave his age and adore the name  
of Christ, and like a bright pure flame  
burned all his days, that he might be  
as a beacon to humanity,  
if you will. I shall disclose to you."  
Al Zobeir bowed, and nearer drew  
the swarthy, turbaned company.

## PART II

# THE LEGEND OF BARLAAM AND JOASAPH

### ARGUMENT

*TO* Abenner, pagan king of an Indian land, is born an heir—the rejoicings—Count Hiram, the King's friend, becomes a Christian—he is captured, and gives his reasons for being a Christian—he is driven from the king's presence—Astrologers cast the horoscope of the King's new-born heir, Joasaph—his future greatness announced—but he will be a Christian—Abenner confines him in his palace—Joasaph, on reaching youth, becomes discontented—Abenner yields to his prayers, and permits him to ride forth—Joasaph sees for the first time in his life a diseased and an old man—Zardan, his guardian, speaks to him of Christianity—Monk Barlaam appears at Abenner's court disguised as a merchant—he obtains access to Joasaph and instructs him in the Christian faith—Joasaph becomes a Christian—Barlaam departs—Zardan confesses to Abenner that Joasaph has been converted to Christianity by Barlaam—Abenner consults Araches—the false trial decided upon—Nachor, the magician, personates Barlaam—Joasaph detects the fraud and forces Nachor to speak in favour of Christianity—Nachor does so, against the King's orders—the magicians

*are unable to refute him—Nachor becomes a Christian—is instructed by Joasaph—Abenner becomes indifferent to his pagan gods—Theodas, the magician, is engaged by the priests to wean Joasaph from the Christian faith—the Prince is tempted by a captive Princess disguised as a handmaiden—the Prince resists her seductions—on her departure he dreams of Paradise, then of Hell—he falls ill of a fever—Theodas comes to heal him by magic—the Prince converts Theodas to Christianity—Abenner hands over to Joasaph a great province, to be ruled in the Christian manner—success and prosperity of the province beneath the rule of Joasaph—death of Abenner—Joasaph succeeds his father, but resigns the government—he retires to the desert, where he dwells in sanctity with Barlaam.*



OUT of the mountains of the East,  
as a bird flits from tree to tree  
flew the tale of Barlaam monk to me  
from lip to lip, from hand to hand,  
telling how to the Indian land  
came Barlaam to King Abenner,  
to teach the Prince who grew the priest.  
This King was fair to look upon ;  
certès, the sun has never shone  
upon a pair so very fair  
as when with his queen of the blue-black hair  
and the look of lovely things that are gone  
he sat upon his jewelled throne.  
One wish of all Abenner had,  
one thing he felt would make him glad  
more than all others : a male heir ;  
(for over many years the queen,  
fair and bare as the moon had been).  
Therefore he ofttimes sought the cave  
where dwelt the Evil Thing, to crave  
an answer to his ardent prayer.  
At length the Mystery spake : " You may  
await an heir upon the day  
the queen shall dream that upon her  
an elephant divine and white  
come down from heaven shall alight."  
Soon after came such a dream to the queen  
the curtains of her couch between.  
Thereat the King did much rejoice,  
and calling with a kingly voice,  
he pardoned all the sinners who  
in durance lay, as was their due  
And the wine flowed and victims fell  
through the King's realm, and all seemed well.  
But distant thunder did foretell  
the coming storm : thus it befell.

Count Hiram was a puissant lord  
whose castles and whose counties lay  
wide through the land, and the King alway  
sware that with Hiram and his sword  
the loss of all he could afford,  
for that he'd win them back again  
with such a liege to help ; but man  
follows his heart and lets the brain  
cry " danger, danger," all in vain.  
For always underneath the ban  
of the great King the Christian monk  
did languish, and so far at least  
Hiram had helped, and never beast  
with equal joy did hunter hunt  
as my Lord King and Hiram Count  
those of the Faith (for both were sunk  
deep in idolatry). Now came  
strange whisperings and the lofty name  
of Hiram, coupled with the creed  
which most Abenner loathed : " He's fled,  
and has left all, and lo ! the steed  
he mounted flying has come again  
full gallop o'er the sandy plain  
back to its stable, riderless."  
" 'Twere better for him to be dead,"  
cried Abenner ; him I did place  
beyond the reach of blame or praise,  
to be my general in the wars,  
in peace to frame with me my laws.  
Depart and seek this rogue who dares  
leave wealth and wife and all the cares  
and all the joys of life to lie  
with wild beasts naked under the sky."  
He spake, and men at arms went forth,  
the abject ministers of his wrath.  
Far in the desert, 'neath a palm

Hiram they found transformed and calm.  
And straightway to the King they led  
this Christian man, and Abenner said :  
“ Now tell me, Hiram, what you do  
thus leaving all ? What secret harm  
has any wrought you in my court,  
that thus you flee away at night  
and like a thief are haled to sight ? ”  
Then answered Hiram, “ First from you  
drive hence your foes, O King, I speak  
when they are gone.” “ Where shall I seek  
these enemies of mine you fear ? ”  
said Abenner, and glanced at who stood near.  
“ Anger and lust, O King, they stand  
upon your right and your left hand ;  
one fiery red as a furnace is ;  
his words like water scalded hiss ;  
purple the other, and he knows  
that most his strength from power grows.”  
Then said the King : “ Behold I drive  
the twain away and in their place  
stand justice and calm temperance.  
Therefore, I pray you, that you strive  
to tell me first by what fell chance  
this plague of Christ made foul your face ;  
then shall we counsel take and see  
how best you may quite cleansed be,  
and led back to reality.”  
Said the Christian : “ If you, O King,  
would know why every finite thing  
I do abhor and find delight,  
henceforth but in the infinite ;  
When a little child I heard the truth,  
which hid in childhood, choked in youth,  
strove up in manhood toward the light ;  
yet did I labour, yet did fight

daily against the powers of night,  
until the Saviour's grace once granted  
for ever the law of sin supplanted,  
and as a veil from me were riven  
the sins which hid my heart from Heaven.  
And from that day the narrow way  
I chose and follow, and detest  
what you and yours still love the best ;  
the joys of life and the returnings,  
the loves of life and the vain yearnings  
which torture, yet are but a dream,  
which never are, but only seem,  
yet wound with deadly dream-world claws,  
yet slay by deadly dream-world laws.  
I love alone the good and true  
and loving them can not love you,  
nor wealth nor honours nor the ties  
which like a chain our families  
weave round our lives. Him know not ye,  
who made man with His mighty hands,  
adorned with immortality,  
and crowned him King of many lands ;  
and more than all made Paradise,  
where he should dwell in godly wise.  
But man, alas, was led astray  
by envy and the thousand sins  
which set his path about like gins,  
tempted along the rose-bowered way  
which leads from Eden towards the sands  
where pleasure rings her empty hands  
and rose-crowns fade and sceptres lie  
like bones stretched out beneath the sky.  
Thus men fell far, and all the spheres  
rang forth with well-deservèd jeers —  
angels and demons laughed to see  
what piteous thing a man may be.

Then Christ, who is the Son of God,  
came down from Heaven and was made man,  
suffered for us beneath the rod,  
and at the last was crucified  
that we might be as we began.  
And Christ it is for us who died  
whom you in pagan wrath deride,  
and plunged in shameful pleasures lie,  
a plague between the earth and sky,  
worshipping 'Gods' which are the spawn  
of your mad brain and die unborn.  
Nay worse than this, for you have drawn  
in your fell path the million slaves,  
who bend the knee to your decree,  
whose backs have felt your soldiers' staves ;  
whose souls in peril stand by you ;  
wherefore, I swear and loudly cry  
that come the worst that you can do,  
no part in this apostasy  
from the Saviour Christ, man's Friend, have I.  
Tear me with beasts or send the sword  
to mow me down before the Lord,  
I shall rejoice at breaking free  
from things that change, and snare and flee.  
The Scripture saith, that the whole world  
in the cloak of evil is enfurled  
and, 'love not the world nor what is there,'  
for all is lust of the flesh or eyes,  
or the pride of life which even dies  
as you look on it, but he who dare  
the will of God do and declare  
liveth eternally, and I  
have left the age and joined with those  
whose mind like mine true wisdom knows,  
who tread the path which points afar  
where the eternal mansions are.

Those love I, those are brethren mine,  
the rest I flee, and wait alone  
in solitude the call divine.  
Fearless of all, my soul at rest,  
O King, I wait on your behest :  
courage in suffering is shown,  
my death may for my life atone."  
Then raged the King at heart full sore,  
longing the holy man to tear  
in pieces, as he dared him there,  
and thought of torments many a score.  
But pride spake first and his pledged word,  
and "Ho," he cried, "you knave and fool,  
I know not in what vilest school  
this dirge of blasphemous sound you learned.  
But now, pardie, your flesh had burned  
for your rash speech, save for my word  
and for our ancient friendship's sake,  
sacred to me, which, though you break,  
preserves you yet against my will  
from the flames that burn and the beasts that kill.  
Therefore, rise up, and get you hence  
back to the desert, but if again  
you e'er come hither, with intense  
and subtle thinkings-out of pain  
from your body I shall draw your soul,  
as the flame rises from live coal."  
Then to the solitudes returned,  
weary and sad, that man of God  
who fain the martyr's crown had earned  
and the flaming path to heaven trod.  
And the queen's dream came true to her—  
for a son she bore to Abenner,  
who of all kings' sons was the most fair.  
Then made the King right royal cheer,  
feasting his subjects far and near.

Then came the chief Astrologer  
and many a lesser follower,  
and the King spake and bade them read  
the infant's life in starry screed.  
And being prepared, they said : " Thy son,  
O King, will reign ere his life be done  
over a land to which thy sway  
is as a single furrow lean  
amid a million sprouting green  
in the young fields, like all Cathay  
to a mule's journey in a day."  
" Where is this land ? " he asked of each ;  
but none knew more or none dared teach,  
till he, the wisest and the oldest,  
nearest to death and eke the boldest,  
who drawing near, in the King's ear  
whispered, like Balaam in the tale :  
" Thy son, O King, the stars have said,  
will follow the sect that most you hate,  
and nothing will his love abate  
and never will his faith grow pale."  
The King thought : " Now indeed I will  
against the wild stars' course prevail ;  
my son shall taste not human ill,  
nor aught of the cursèd creed shall know  
whence all things vile and evil flow."  
Therefore, he bade his slaves to build  
'mid spacious trees a palace fair,  
guarded without, and inside filled  
with all things loveliest and most rare.  
And ministers he sent to lead  
his son's first steps, and none might dare  
speak of disease, old age, or death,  
or poverty, and his court indeed  
was comely and sage in the flower of age,  
drawing a quiet, equal breath.



If any ailed, straightway his place  
was taken by one as fair of face,  
and the King's son told that round the throne  
men bloomed or fell like flowers alone ;  
and of the Christian creed no word  
within those marble halls was heard.  
Thus acted Abenner, the King,  
and saw, but saw not anything,  
and heard, but understood no word.  
Meanwhile his son from childhood grew  
toward youth and hardly aught he knew,  
but in his face the virtues shone  
and from his eyes an even mind  
smiled forth his comely world upon :  
yet he wanted, sought, and could not find  
that knowledge which the foolish King,  
shooting his arrows toward the skies,  
bade still conceal from his son's eyes,  
who ever craved for the unknown thing.  
It happened that upon a day  
he found himself at the tennis play,  
alone with one whom above all  
his ministers he loved the best,  
and as back and forward sped the ball  
he watched his time and hit it away  
outside the walls and called with zest :  
“ Heigh-ho, the ball has gone to see  
what things in the world without may be ;  
yet the King's son must ever stay  
within his prison walls ; I pray  
you, Zardan, tell me why just here  
I must grow like a flower from year to year,  
guarded by you from the unknown ? ”  
“ Your father orders it, O Prince.”  
“ I know, I know, but methinks I've shown,  
these years we twain have together grown,

that not ungrateful, not unkind  
is the Prince by some strange whim confined.  
Tell me and friendship shall be yours,  
sworn by a Prince whose word endures.”  
Then Zardan told him of the truth,  
his father’s love and his desire  
that his son from childhood on to youth,  
from youth to manhood should be free  
from all the ills of humanity.  
But not as yet did Zardan dare  
tell Joasaph what these things were.  
So the Prince thanked him and went forth  
with lighter heart from the tennis court ;  
and often now his father sought,  
watching his face till the day when wrath  
dwelt not therein. Then, “ Why am I,  
dear Father, hid from the earth and the sky ?  
always I mourn and dark unrest  
forever rends my suffering breast ! ”  
Then the King answered : “ Dear my son,  
this loving you full well I have done  
that all your life through there should be for you  
nothing but joy without alloy,  
pleasure of body, joy of soul.  
Closed in your palace I’d have you drain  
the cup of all pleasure and I would strain  
from the golden juice the lees of pain.”  
Joasaph answered : “ Alas, the whole  
of my life is longing, and nought can cure  
this pain that will evermore endure,  
till like another man I may  
fare forth and meet the world on its way.”  
Then sick and sorry at heart the King  
bethought him that all his love did bring  
his son no pleasure, and he might die  
shut up against his will from the sky.

Therefore he ordered slaves and horses,  
chariots and men at arms to stand  
ready to follow the free courses  
which Joasaph should deign command.  
But his father's dream he yet would follow,  
though his son flit forth like a new-fledged swallow.  
And, "Let none dare aught of evil shew  
my son nor speak of any woe!  
roses and smiles wherever he tread,  
and let the maidens' lips be red,  
and flutes and timbrels haunt the groves  
wherein his princely fancy roves,  
and at the opening of some glade  
some pleasant comedy be played,  
and let the utmost of your thought  
to please and glad my son be brought.  
For lo, I build a golden screen  
Prince Joasaph and the world between."  
Thus spake Abenner, and Joasaph now  
might fare forth with a smoother brow.  
Wherever he went on every hand  
shone forth the brightest of the land.  
And oft he mounted on his steed  
and to his councillors gave no heed,  
but sped along upon the wind,  
musing with open, happy mind.  
And ever as towards a village clearing  
him as the folk saw quickly nearing,  
smiles and flags did flaunt in the air  
and joy was summoned everywhere.  
But at the turning of a way  
it happed upon a fateful day,  
he saw one dragged, one pushed before,  
and heard the closing of a door,  
as though some precious thing were there.  
Then riding up to the threshold ere

his followers knew what he would do,  
he cried with a loud voice : " Ho ! within ;  
the King's son waits, who would speak with you.'  
Then the door creaked, and cracked and thin  
answered a voice : " We dare not open,  
O Joasaph, for the King's word spoken.  
I am old and blind, and a leper lies  
at my feet who is made of miseries."  
But " Open, open," cried the youth ;  
then the hinges creaked and the door stood ajar :  
and the fates shewed, cruel as they are.  
He saw the blind man staring out  
and the leper swathed in rags about.  
Thus knew he the other half of the truth,  
and the form of his countenance was wrought  
to another shape by the strange new thought.  
Then he harkened with a hard-drawn breath  
as Zardan told of sorrow and death,  
pressed him with questions : " Can a man know  
he will die when his age is so and so ?  
Can he tell if sickness wait for him  
or bright health ever play on the brim  
of the cup of life ? And whither we pass  
when life is ended, and why, alas,  
is the world thus choked and sown with woe,  
and who can deliver those who grow  
older in all misfortune while  
others the laughing years beguile  
with lutes and songs and roses red,  
lilies and maidens with drooped head ;  
fragrant the maiden as the flower  
and each made new for each new hour ?"  
Then Zardan answered as one would  
who weaned a child from his childhood.  
But for the woe and the end of all  
and what hereafter may befall

us men who have lived on earth our day,  
one sect there is which followeth Christ,  
the Son of God, and the narrow way :  
they are meek and poor and are baptized :  
this holds the truth and the rest is lies.  
But the King from out the utmost bourn  
of his kingdom has driven the heads that are shorn,  
the long brown robe and the girdle of rope.”  
Then the Prince gazed in Zardan’s eyes,  
and with the light of the star of hope  
dancing in his did ask him more  
of the Christian’s sect and the God they adore,  
of the Mother of Christ, and how they came  
the truth to guard like a sacred flame.  
But Zardan had told him all he knew,  
and daily the young Prince sadder grew,  
cared not for dances, songs nor all  
those joys that the budding youth enthrall,  
drave off his courtiers, and would eat  
dry bread alone, nor would he deign  
ease the brown girls of their amorous pain,  
treading their rose crowns under his feet.  
Then, from the deep blue vault of the sky,  
fell upon Joasaph that eye  
which sleeps not and beholdeth all,  
and fain would save and fain make known  
that path which of all paths alone  
from earth leads upward to His throne.  
And in this wise did the thing befall.  
In the solitudes of Sennaar  
a monk there dwelt who was wiser far  
than all his fellows : to him by night  
came dreams from heaven which bade him seek  
the land of India that he might  
to the King’s own son reveal the light,  
who in the toils of sin was weak.

Then Barlaam (for thus the monk was hight),  
being by the word divine aware  
of the aching heart of Joasaph,  
returned to the age, and for his wear  
gat he a merchant's robe and staff,  
the gifts of God, and setting sail  
to India came and sought out there  
the town where Joasaph did dwell.  
And when he knew it journeyed thither  
and there he dwelt, a quiet liver,  
and those who questioned him did tell  
the tale of a wondrous gem to sell.  
But this to no one would he show,  
save, as he said, to some great prince who  
the worth of the precious gem would know  
and pay the merchant all his due.  
Now this he did to prepare the road  
which led to Joasaph's abode ;  
and Zardan the faithful and the old,  
of whom before in the tale was told,  
heard of the merchant and his gem,  
and seeking Barlaam said to him :  
" What, sir, is then this gem so rare  
that you bring from far and will show to none ?  
is there the like found anywhere,  
or is your stone the only one ? "  
Then Barlaam answered in this wise :  
To sell my sparkling merchandise,  
I have climbed the waves and have dared the rage  
waiting in tiger's yellow eyes.  
My jewel is the only one  
in all the world, and I will engage  
unto the Prince the same to give,  
for indeed it is a magic stone,  
fit for great prince's hand alone."  
Then answered Zardan : " As I live,

you shall come to the Prince and shall reveal  
to him the virtues of the jewel ;  
but tell me first and let me see  
what virtues in the stone may be."

"The stone," said Barlaam, "will straightway  
heal

all ills of the body and the mind,  
make wise the foolish, make to hear  
the deaf, and make the dumb to find  
their speech, and more ; it will make kind  
the hearts that hate ; and the hearts that fear  
will happy grow ; all these in the stone  
are virtues that I will make known  
to your lord the Prince when toward him led."

Then answered Zardan, and he said :

"All honour light upon your head.

But first to me the jewel show,  
and then together we will go  
to the Prince's self." Then Barlaam sighed :

"Alas ! that your prayer should be denied.

For lo ! I have told you of the good  
which the stone can work for sicklihood

of mind and body ; but in the eye,

if any evil humour lie,

and one look on it, then fares he ill,

for the darkness of night his world doth fill.

Or again, if any upon the gem

gaze, and his body be not as pure

as lilies abloom upon their stem,

then hardly may his life endure ;

for the jewel will parch and burn his blood,

as the sun the flats of the river mud.

And pardon me, sir, but methinks in your gaze,  
though purer than some, is yet a haze

which floats between you and the upper sky."

"If that is indeed the truth, not I



will view the jewel ; but come with me  
and straightway you the Prince shall see,  
and to His Highness's self make known  
the virtues of the precious stone,'  
said Zardan. And soon the Prince they found,  
lying upon a mat on the ground,  
who idly within his fingers wound  
the silk strings of a golden purse,  
and at his side did a page rehearse  
those tales which India's childhood nurse.  
Then Zardan entered : " Peace to you,"  
said the Prince, as the pair made reverence due.  
He spake and raised him from his place.  
Then Zardan : " May I beg your grace  
to hear this foreign merchant tell  
of his jewel with the magic spell."  
Then the Prince, touched by the grace divine,  
smiled, and without a word made sign  
to Zardan and the page that they  
should from his presence pass away.  
" O peace be with you, mighty Prince ;"  
" And peace with you, O man of God ;  
it seems a thousand ages since  
I knew you, and yet not before  
my palace steps your feet have trod.  
You have a jewel rich and rare ;  
I know it, for I see it there  
a-glittering in your eyes, which through me  
pierce like a sword that would undo me.  
Reveal to me your sacred lore  
which all these years my thoughts adore  
and fain would reach, where now it lies  
hidden, yet shining, in your eyes."  
" No merchant indeed, O Prince, I am,  
and mine no mortal merchandise  
to sell, but the Christian monk Barlaam.



But first I would make proof of you  
before the truth you come unto.  
A sower once went forth to sow  
and as he went his seed did throw,  
and some the birds caught up as it lay  
upon the open hard highway,  
and some fell in the rocky places,  
some among thorns in desert spaces.  
These all must perish, but some there fell  
in the good soil and prospered well,  
bringing forth fruit an hundredfold.  
May you, O Prince, even so enfold  
the truth in you as it is told  
of the good soil." Then the Prince said,  
"O Barlaam, when your name was spoken,  
meseemed the silence then was broken  
which weighed a century o'er my head ;  
as no mere merchant stand you there,  
but as an heavenly messenger."  
Then answered Barlaam : "You do well,  
O Prince, thus soon my end to tell,  
and now I will discourse to you  
of another Prince who also knew  
that the robe and the wearer may be two.  
He was a mighty king, and riding  
in his golden chariot, past him striding  
espied two beggars, clad in torn  
garments and faces long outworn  
with the cruel ravage of disease.  
Then sprang the King down from his chariot,  
and before those starvelings on his knees  
their blessing and their pardon sought.  
But the great men who were of his suite  
held it by no means fair nor meet  
that the dignity of the diadem  
and the ample sweep of the Kingdom's hem

before two beggars' feet should lie.  
But they, not daring to make plain  
to the King what vexed them, straight did hie  
to the Prince his brother, that he again  
should tell the King ; and thus there came  
to the monarch's ears the word of blame.  
Now the custom in this land was so,  
when the King willed a man should die,  
that a trumpeter a blast should blow  
before his door. As evening drew  
her gray soft veils across the sky,  
and the sorrows of the day seemed o'er,  
before his brother's guarded door  
sounded the trump : and thus he knew  
that on the morrow he must die.  
So with the night his vigil grew,  
for never again would the sun's gold mane  
spread glory for him in the East again,  
nor the sweet company of the birds  
for him give out their soul-sent words  
as he sat in his summer paradise,  
where the blue sky peeps and the wood-breeze  
sighs.

Then with wild hair, and all forlorn,  
called he for sombre garb, and at dawn,  
girdled with sorrow, robed in woe,  
he and his wife and children go  
to the wide palace of the King,  
where hardly yet does the gilding fling  
gold to pay back the gold of the sun ;  
and the guards are sleeping every one.  
They stand in the court of the King's palace,  
black their robes, and white is the face  
of the wife, and the tiny children's grace  
all fled away in the great fear  
of the mystery which is so near.

But lo, from the golden gate comes forth  
the King, the brother, no sign of wrath  
marked on his kind imperial face,  
where the hand of power and of time can trace  
only the lines which deeper growing,  
make clear within the bright soul glowing.  
And, ' Brother mine, rise up,' he cried,  
' rise up, my sister, do not dread  
aught ill from me for our loved one's head.  
How know ye not that the trumpet lied,  
who have sat by me upon my throne,  
counting the years flit by each one,  
equal and loving, brother and friend?  
Why thought you then that such love would end?  
You who have done all good to me,  
how came you not the fraud to see?  
But since you such great fear did show,  
how was it, brother, you did not know  
when in the dust I lay before  
those beggars, I who have sinned so sore  
against God's wisdom and God's law,  
that those were heralds sent from heaven,  
before whose feet great kings must even  
bow down like common men, and crave  
His pardon who alone can save?  
Therefore the trumpeter I sent  
dear brother on your salvage bent  
that his shrill blast should wake your soul  
wandering in error from the goal.  
As for my courtiers, I will make  
a trial of them for your sake.'  
Therewith he bade his workmen build  
four caskets, two embossed in gold,  
two smeared with pitch ; the first he filled  
with dead men's bones, but the second hold  
unguents and perfumes and rare gems

and cloth of silver, such as hems  
the queen's robe, weary of the gold.  
Then in turn he called each lord, and said  
'Tell me, I pray : of the caskets which  
are the more excellent, those of pitch  
or the other sort ?' Then each one made  
like answer and 'The gold,' he said.  
'Open the caskets,' bids the King :  
and straightway from the golden cases  
strikes a foul odour in their faces,  
while from the pitch-smeared scents take wing  
as from wet roses in young spring.  
The jewels wink and smile in the sun,  
and the courtiers shamefaced every one  
will bow and smile but wish the while  
that they indeed were very far.  
'Symbols of man these caskets are,'  
declared the King, 'the first are dight  
in power and glory and cloth of gold ;  
open their hearts and you behold  
such corpses as come here to sight.  
But of the others which glitter there,  
foul caskets teeming with jewels rare,  
these are those vagabonds whom I  
looking upon with the spirit's eye,  
saw their fair souls their rags shine through,  
and therefore knelt that I might do  
them honour and but touch the hem  
of the spirit's robes which covered them :  
aye purple robes their spirits wore  
and they were glorious o'er and o'er.'  
Thus spoke that King, and in this wise  
he taught them to distrust their eyes,  
too apt to snatch at the things of sense,  
but rather to use intelligence,  
which like a torch-light leads the soul

step by step to its distant goal."  
 Thus ended Barlaam : and " Fair the flow,  
 sweet saint, of your discourse, but I would know "  
 (said Joasaph) " who is the God  
 that sent the sower forth to sow  
 and shines on all you say as the sun  
 on the traveller's footsteps one by one  
 as the weary leagues for home are trod."  
 " If you would know who is my Lord,"  
 said Barlaam, " He is Christ the unique  
 Son of God, He is the Word,  
 He is sole blessed, sole immortal,  
 in Him is refuge for the weak,  
 He dwells in light beyond the portal  
 with the Father and the Paraclete,  
 whom all to worship is most meet.  
 For One in three and three in One,  
 more blinding than the noonday sun  
 together does their Godhead run  
 and veils them from our purblind sight.  
 Three Persons in one perfect light,  
 knowing no end and no beginning,  
 eternal, changeless, uncreate,  
 bodiless, ignorant of sinning,  
 though knowing all ; who did create  
 all that we see and may not see  
 from nothing ; and first He made to be  
 the countless company of powers  
 invisible which haunt the air  
 and mock our vision everywhere.  
 And next He shaped this world of ours,  
 the earth, the sea, and the deep sky,  
 and adorned them with a joyful light—  
 even the shining from on high  
 of the sun by day and the moon by night.  
 He filled the earth with the beasts that play,

and the sea with the fishes that make their way  
rhythmically, mysteriously  
through the caves and palaces under the waves ;  
He spake and all these were.

But afterwards He made Him man  
with the earth's dust and breathed His soul  
into the dust, so that there ran  
the quickening impulse of the divine  
through him and therewith full control  
of his own will and power to think  
and save himself upon the brink,  
where fell the countless herd of swine.

Next, woman, of man's rib He made,  
that she should be for him to aid.

And over all things man He set,  
and made for him a paradise  
where all things good and lovely met ;  
Eden he called it, and it lies  
in a far valley towards the East ;  
and there God placed each kind of beast,  
and in the woodland many a bird  
flitted from bowing tree to tree  
all innocent as man might be  
now, had he harkened to the word  
which was spoken to him by the Lord.

' For in the garden one tree is  
and the fruit of it is the fruit of death,  
therefore eat not of that,' God saith.

And Adam now indeed I wis  
were innocent and living still  
in that fair Garden free from ill,  
save for the evil serpent's wooing  
who talked with Eve for her undoing ;  
one of the heavenly host was he,  
mighty in mighty company,  
and free of will like man created

his Maker from of old he hated.  
Therefore from heaven God him hurled ;  
he fell to rule the infernal world,  
and fallen thus, he envied man,  
and being wise conceived a plan  
which should ruin Adam and ruin Eve  
and drive them forth to toil and grieve.  
Therefore a subtle snake disguised  
from Hell to Eden Satan hied  
and worked on Eve to taste the fruit,  
and be wise as a goddess in high heaven.  
And Adam yielding to her suit  
also did eat, and both were driven  
to wander, multiply, and die,  
wringing vain hands beneath blind sky.  
And the deeper plunged were men in evil  
always the more rejoiced the devil,  
who with his wealth of sin innate  
man's soul did ever the more inflate.  
And God when He sees that the wide world  
in Satan's meshes is enfurled  
pours forth His waters from the skies  
and in the waves the whole earth lies.  
But Noah with his family gat  
an ark of wood, and they did float  
till on the mount of Ararat  
touched earth at last the world's own boat.  
But of Noah evil men were born  
who held that in blind chance alone  
the hand of providence was shown,  
jeering at God with lip of scorn :  
others that in the stars of birth  
is shadowed forth man's course on earth ;  
and some adored the moon and the sun,  
or the stars which their fixed courses run ;  
some fire, some reptiles, and some brought



to the carved idol, paint-besmeared,  
vile things, to vileness thus endeared  
the homage of their vagrant thought.  
And having made these images  
endowed they them with all foul that is  
in the heart of man ; for some, they said,  
were thieves and beggars, some struck dead,  
brother or father, some were slaves,  
and all were criminals or knaves.  
Alone throughout that impious age  
did Abraham his mind engage  
to find the hider of things hidden  
beyond the range of human vision.  
For when he saw sea, sky, and earth,  
the sun, the moon, and every star,  
each fixed and ordered from its birth,  
he knew that by no accident  
these things had happened as they are.  
But God he recognised in all,  
and knew that He can make to fall,  
He only build again, and sent  
by the angels' stair his prayer to heaven.  
Then God said : ' Now, indeed, I am  
well pleased with this man Abraham,  
and he and his shall prosper even  
a thousandfold, and they shall be  
the race peculiar unto Me.'  
Thus spake the Lord, and led them forth  
from the land of Egypt, where the wrath  
of Pharaoh schemed all manner of ill ;  
but with full measure God did fill  
the cup of Egypt's suffering—  
plagued with all plagues, and when the sea  
had stood aside and let there be  
dry land for Israel's pilgriming,  
and Pharaoh followed with his host,



then the waves met and all was lost.  
Thus Moses and Aaron led the race  
beloved of God for a long space  
into the wilderness, and God wrought  
strange miracles ; with heavenly bread  
He fed them, and Moses from the Mount  
tables of stone unblinded brought,  
from which the coming ages count  
the law of right, the law of wrong.  
And after wanderings weary and long  
the Lord His chosen people led  
to the land so long since promised  
to Abraham and his seed,  
to the land with milk and honey flowing,  
with greenwood trees and fair fruits growing,  
to the promised land indeed.  
But always in the mind of man  
the devil's words of poison ran :  
grim death usurped the throne of the world ;  
and by their wilful error hurled  
to hell, mankind must groan for aye.  
When therefore in such pitiful way  
God saw the people of His love,  
His only Son He sent to them  
of the Virgin born in Bethlehem ;  
and as she went with child above  
shivered the wings of the Holy Dove.  
Born was the Saviour, and He knew  
no gradual growth as children do,  
but blossomed in a single night  
to flood the world with heavenly light.  
For thirty years thus Jesus taught,  
and many to salvation brought,  
and in the waters of the Jordan  
He was baptized of St. John ;  
and soaring down that white-plumed Dove

(the Holy Spirit from above)  
lit upon Him, and a Voice did cry,  
'This is My Son, well pleased am I.'  
Thenceforward many signs and great  
the Son of God on earth revealed,  
for lepers white as snow He healed,  
the blind He did illuminate,  
drove forth the dæmon, healed the dumb,  
made that the dead to life did come,  
renewing everywhere the strain  
of righteousness in man again,  
and from vain joys and things diurnal  
taught men to look for the life eternal.  
And therefore chose He from the rest  
Apostles twelve He loved the best,  
that they should pass from land to land,  
and signs and wonders for a brand  
stamped true their words of prophecy,  
preaching the Word which cannot die.  
Then the Jews would slay Him, and suborned  
Judas, whom Jesus had adorned  
with His fair friendship, and had chosen  
among the twelve. This man they cozen  
with promise of a pitiful fee,  
and the Lord Jesus he will yield  
for the price of a gibbet in a field,  
where Judas goes to hang himself.  
Thus in the Gentile's hands doth He  
suffer all evil patiently,  
nailed to the arms of the cruel tree,  
where in the *human* nature taken  
to save the world, His frame was shaken,  
but the *divine* did aye remain  
free from all cognisance of pain.  
And so it happed on the abhorred  
Cross was crucified the Lord

Christ Jesus, and to Hell descended,  
where crowds of suffering souls attended  
His footsteps, and the Lord of the land  
must yield to his overlord's command,  
set free those souls of the just in Hell,  
and lo, they fly in Heaven to dwell !  
and the third day He rose again,  
conqueror of death and sin and pain,  
and when the forty days were ended  
again to Heaven He ascended,  
and sits at the right hand of the Lord,  
whence He will come once more to earth  
to judge the living and the dead,  
and render to each man his worth.  
And afterwards the Ghostly Word  
on the Apostles lit and stirred  
the spirit of all speech in them,  
and on their heads the tongues of flame  
wavered and waxed or waned as came  
with God's own breath the inspirations ;  
and they went forth to teach the nations."   
As Barlaam ended, swarm on swarm,  
like bees for honey, or after storm  
rapacious sea birds seeking food,  
came the Prince's questions : "Are all men good  
by nature? Wherefore did the Lord  
when all was in His power seek  
to bind man to Him with a word?  
And the Lord Jesus, why so meek?"  
When all were answered and the mind  
of the fair Prince some rest could find,  
then Barlaam taught him of the virtue  
in Baptism lies, and how 'tis due  
each Christian be baptized, "for  
even now perchance is Death at the door,  
and he who unbaptized dies  
plays fast and loose with Paradise."

As rung this warning in his ears  
burst forth the Prince with contrite tears,  
clung to the monk and aye implored him.  
Gently spake Barlaam and restored him,  
and from the fountain in the court,  
where then they stood, some drops he caught  
in his hollow hand and made the sign  
of the cross and spake the words divine.

“And though thy sins be as a million,  
though they glare forth as doth vermilion,  
they will be whitened like as snow ;  
though coloured purple, white as wool.”  
Then Barlaam made the Prince to know  
how that the world with snares was full,  
and told the tale of the man who fell  
through fear of death into a well.

“He from an unicorn did flee  
and heeded not the well till he  
had fallen therein, but caught perchance  
on his downward path at the little branch  
of a tree that clung within a crevice ;  
and deep below in the abyss  
he gazing sees a dragon lying  
him with red cruel eyes espying ;  
and by the stone where his toes do rest  
an aspic with a fourfold crest,  
while the frail branch to which he clings  
as over the abyss it swings,  
two mice, one white and the other black,  
behold ! with busy jaws attack.

But lo ! some drops of honey slipping  
adown the bough he would be lipping  
(for ah ! so sweet), and at once with scorn  
drives from his thoughts the unicorn,  
the mice, the aspic’s fourfold crest,  
the waiting dragon and the rest,

and only thinks how he shall try  
some drops of the honey to come by.  
The unicorn, O Prince, is death,  
the well is the world, where every breath  
is drawn in peril, the two mice  
are the night and the day which eat away  
the branch of life, and the honey dripping  
the joys of the world which man entice,  
yet always from his lips are slipping.  
The aspic with the fourfold crest  
figures the elements at rest  
within our body, which resolvèd  
the human frame is quick dissolvèd.  
The dragon, cruel and flamboyant,  
is the vast belly of Hell aye waiting  
for those who in lust's arms do pant,  
careless of all but pleasure's sating."  
Then said the Prince, "How veritable,  
how artful is this pictured fable!  
Cease not, I pray, such tropes to turn,  
that I may diligently learn  
the nature of our life on earth  
and what to those who love it worth."  
Answered the Ancient: "Earthly lovers  
and such as the hood of lust aye covers  
are as the man whose friends were three  
but he loved them not in like degree,  
For two he cherished and these he gave  
gold and silver and all things brave  
which he possessed, while the third alway  
he passed off with a smile and a nay.  
But the day came when he was brought  
before the King in his judgment court  
and ordered to find security  
for a great sum: then speedily  
he seeks the first, and the first can lend

but a single garment to his friend.  
And the second said : ' I will come with you  
part of the road towards the King,  
further I cannot, for 'tis due  
some business to an end I bring.'  
Then at the last he sought that third,  
and humbly with many a pleading word  
craved pardon for his friendlessness,  
pleaded for aid in his distress.  
Then the friend said : ' I will go before  
and with all my power the King implore.'  
The first of the friends is wealth, the second  
children and wife, but the third friend  
on whom that sufferer scarce had reckoned  
is Good Works faithful to the end.  
For what will a man not do for gold ?  
Hunger and thirst and heat and cold  
and his very life in the scale he'll cast  
so that much gold be his at the last.  
And what the profit ?—a winding sheet ;  
but that the worms will likewise eat.  
And what of the second ?— children and wives  
and kinsmen, for whom we risk the lives  
of soul and body, but when we die  
what profit have we ? - their company  
to the sepulchre ; but see them hie  
back to the world of things that be,  
not less the dead one's memory hiding  
than the tomb the place of his abiding.  
But the third friend whom we requited  
hardly with thanks, his friendship slighted.  
He is the troop of our good deeds ;  
hope, faith and charity and alms  
and pity, and himself precedes  
us to the Judgment Seat and calms  
the wrath of God, and he disarms

our cruel enemies which wait  
to accuse us at the dreadful gate  
and claim the utmost of their due,  
which he will pay for me, for you,  
forgetting as true friend forgets  
that from his store he pays our debts.”  
Thereat said Joasaph : “ May the Lord  
bless thee, O learned one, whose voice  
maketh the soul in me rejoice,  
and if it please thee, in a word  
paint me the vanity of the world  
and how a man may sojourn there  
without he be in sin enfurled.”  
Then Barlaam told of the king of the year.  
“ In a certain city the custom was  
to crown a stranger without fear ;  
and when the ermine lay across  
his shoulders and the diadem  
gleamed on his brow, secure in them  
each thought in turn : ‘ Now indeed am I  
free of the land and shall ever reign  
till the time come for me to die.’  
Thus mused those fools in fancies vain :  
for at the end of the year the power  
and the wealth were taken, and each one sent  
to a lone isle in banishment.  
But once it chanced that the king of the hour  
was wise in time, and sent before  
clothing and food and a great store  
of the choice faring of a king ;  
so that when came the end of the year,  
reavèd of all, yet with goodly cheer  
he went to the island of banishment,  
nor lacked he there for anything,  
living in everlasting joy,  
while those, his foolish predecessors,

who had not sent thither of their treasures,  
cold, famine, and disease destroy.

Now the world is the city of the tale,  
devils the burghers, men the kings,  
born for the most part vain and frail,  
whom the fiend's cunning ofttimes brings  
to set no store on the time before,  
but dwelling quite in things diurnal  
they do forget the life eternal."

Then asked the Prince, "Since all you say  
is true, and clearer than the day  
the faith of Christ; why doth the King  
my father seek the monks to slay  
and the true faith to nothing bring?"

Then Barlaam answered in this wise:

"Truth ofttimes in example lies;  
and I will tell you of a king  
who ruled well in everything,  
save that he lacked of faith; one night  
his Vizier and the King did creep  
forth in disguise, when most did sleep,  
to roam the city; and soon caught sight  
of a light in a hut, and drawing near  
beheld two beggars rag-beclad,  
dancing and singing with much cheer.

'How comes it that these fools are glad?'

queried the King, 'when you and I  
with all our wealth and power have had  
but joys which by their joy are sad.'

'What think you of their life, O King?'

answered the Vizier; 'May I die  
if ever aught so filthy, vile

our kingly gaze hath dared defile,'

said the King; and the Vizier: 'Know, O King,  
that just so vile, so mean a thing,  
our life must seem to the Most High



as theirs whose rags and joy come nigh  
troubling your regal mood. Alone  
those treasures weigh which endure alway  
—belief in God and in His Son.’”

This of the faith and this one more  
told Barlaam of his copious store.

“A merchant once his son affianced  
to a damsel glittering o’er and o’er  
with wealth and beauty and allied  
to all that merchants hold most high ;  
but, for he loved her not, the son  
took flight, and as he fled came nigh  
to a woodman’s hut where a fair maid  
worked with her hands, and working made  
much thanks to God : and when he asks  
why toiling ’mid ungrateful tasks  
she praises God ; thus she replies :

‘ For the chance of entering Paradise.’

Struck to the heart, the traveller now  
would make her his with many a vow.  
But her father saith him, ‘ Nay, for you  
are rich and splendid, and the due  
of the poor is marriage with the poor.’

Then will the young man make him sure  
of the fair maid, so throws in the air  
turban begemmed, nor yet will spare  
his brodered cloak, and dons such weed  
as wears the woodman’s self indeed.

And in the house he craves to stay  
working with them until the day  
the father smiles and touched to see  
such labour and such constancy  
gives him his daughter and a treasure  
worth all the gold in the world together.”

“Such treasure, Barlaam, finding you  
I find,” said Joasaph, “but how grew

the faith, I know not, in my breast,  
so late with fears and doubts oppressed.”  
“By divers paths indeed doth God  
lead those He loves to Him ; you trod  
the path direct, the royal road,  
yours is a special grace bestowed,”  
said Barlaam, “and the little tale  
of the churl, how he caught the nightingale,  
will serve to show how faith may fail.  
Once a churl snared a nightingale,  
and as the brown bird throbbed in his hand :  
‘Sir,’ said he, ‘if you let me free  
three wisdoms you shall understand.’  
He promised, and the bird began :  
“‘The first is, try but what you can ;’  
‘the second, “ne’er regret the past ;”  
“believe no lies,” that is the last.’  
Then the churl set free the bird,  
and as she flew in the air she cried :  
‘O fool that hast my wisdoms heard,  
thysself great treasure hast denied.  
For in my body a margaret  
lieth which is indeed as great  
as an ostrich egg ;’ thereat the man  
believed the bird and sorrowed sore  
because the same he had no more.  
So he cried softly : ‘Come again  
into my hand, dear little bird,  
the better thy wisdoms to explain,  
and thee with all humanity  
will I entreat and set thee free,  
when again thy wisdoms I have heard.’  
Thereat the bird : ‘Now well I know :  
thou are a fool, for that thou hast  
my wisdoms three thus let go waste,  
as this thy speech doth clearly shew.

For much thou longest for me now  
high perched above thy head on the bough ;  
and thinkest in my body small  
to find an egg more large than all.'  
Thus mocked the bird that churl indeed,  
and those may mock of the Christian creed  
at such as in the painted face  
of some vain idol seek for grace."  
Then the Prince thanked Barlaam that he  
adorned the faith thus cunningly  
with stories like a brodered border  
framing the picture's comely order.  
And Barlaam told of the peacocks true  
and how the King the raven knew.  
"Heaps of rubies and emeralds  
and the same set round with the amorous gold  
which in each carved and supple fold  
the coming of an Empress heralds ;  
and sapphires smiling like the sea  
when the sun shines, and that strange stone --  
of jewels the chameleon,  
daily and nightly changing hue  
from blue to red, from red to blue ;  
and the opal and the veiled moonstone  
showed the King to the merchant, and : ' Fair  
to see,  
O King, are these,' that merchant said.  
Then the monarch to a garden led  
his guest, and animals long dead  
elsewhere in the world here browsed or fled  
as they drew near, the unicorn,  
the hypogriff, and the phoenix bird  
which of the golden flames is born.  
Said the merchant : ' Rare beyond all price  
are the beasts and fowls, but hast thou heard  
of the peacock with an hundred eyes

fixed in his tail?' - And the King said: 'Nay,  
but my vizier shall go straightway  
and bearing with him store of gold  
seek out the land where such birds are sold.'  
Thus spake the King, and the vizier  
must seek the peacocks far and near.  
But since he found them not; said he:  
'Methinks no peacock fowl can there be  
in all the world, but since the King  
knows not the fowl, 'twere best I bring  
a raven with an hundred eyes  
painted upon him;' so he dyes  
the raven and himself with lies  
and brings the fowl the King unto  
swearing it is the peacock true.  
But soon again that merchant came  
and as a present for the King  
two real peacocks he doth bring.  
Thereat the vizier, who knew not shame,  
cried: 'Ha! these birds which the merchant brings  
have falsehood written on their wings.  
Come hither, all; come hither and see,  
*mine* must the real peacock be.'  
And the merchant answered him no word,  
but called for water and on the bird  
which the vizier brought did pour the same;  
and black at once that raven came  
all forlorn, of his glory shorn;  
then the vizier poured water on  
the peacocks true, but the brighter shone  
their hundred eyes and pierced him through  
the while he poured, as was his due.  
And when these things the King did see,  
honoured indeed must the merchant be  
and driven for ever from his side  
was the vizier who the raven dyed.

Now Jesus is the merchant bearing  
 peacocks of truth for the world's sharing,  
 the vizier an idolater ;  
 and the pagan creeds which everywhere  
 steal and lie and change and dye  
 are the black raven painted fair."

Joasaph looked at the saint and saw  
 his face deep furrowed o'er and o'er  
 and grey beard almost to the floor ;  
 therefore he asked, " Pray tell me, master,  
 how many winters' snows have passed ere  
 Christ like the dove from heaven alit  
 upon your mind and kindled it ? "

Then Barlaam answered, " Twelve."

" And for how many years did you dig and delve  
 the sands of the desert of ignorance  
 ere the great day of deliverance ? "

Then Barlaam answered, " Not a day ;  
 for all my living was only dying,  
 and all my prayers were but as lying,  
 till the hour came when the tongues of flame  
 flickered about my cell afar  
 hid in the desert of Sennaar,  
 licked the stains of the world away,  
 purged me thoroughly and burned the past,  
 so that my days from first to last  
 till those were as coal on the furnace cast.

Harken, O Prince, to the tale of one  
 whose life did split, as mine hath done.  
 A Prince was born upon the night  
 when a fiery star was trailing bright  
 its tail through heaven, and lo ! the same  
 brake off and in two parts it came.  
 Therefore the wise men of the land  
 foretold that the Prince's life in twain  
 would break and the halves quite separate stand

as things which cannot meet again.  
And soon his father died, and he  
ruled and lived most royally,  
with wars and conquests. many wives ;  
living in one short span the lives  
of many men, nor marked in the least  
the flight of time, but a great feast  
each year upon his birthday gave  
where all of beautiful and brave  
in his wide kingdom ever came  
and sung with crimson lips his fame  
or struck their shields and cried his name.  
It happened once as he reclined  
on his royal couch and the table lined  
with smiling ornaments beheld,  
'All but my kingly face I see,  
chief splendour of this company,'  
he cried, 'bring mirrors : ' so they held  
a silver mirror him before.  
Then seamed with furrows o'er and o'er  
his face and the wild locks of youth  
drooping or grey, or fled forsooth  
he saw, nor revelled any more,  
turning from lies to seek the truth.  
And ah ! what guerdon, Prince, for you  
sunk in the depths of the life of the sense,  
when now the barriers are broke through,  
when now for you outshines the intense  
life of the livers in the truth.  
Such as that King's, so was my youth  
rioted, wasted, revelled away,  
in pleasures frail as the flowers that sway.  
What is the joy of it worth in sooth  
by the deep inmost uttermost joy  
which fills my soul without alloy,  
and now in you is rising, rising,

and on this day of your baptizing  
breaks forth with splendours as the sun  
shining from heaven when night is done ? ”  
Then said the Prince, “ With what you tell,  
O saint, I feel my soul doth swell  
to burst its prison ; and since you came  
to save me from a life of shame,  
take me with you, that dwelling free  
in the desert with the Lord and thee,  
in that most admirable life  
I may save the years of youth and of strife.”  
Then answered Barlaam : “ Such request  
with a parable is answered best.  
A rich man once a young gazelle  
kept for his pleasure, and all day  
the fair slim creature wonted play  
about the lawns and the woods as well,  
coming at call, and licked the hand  
which gave it bread, and pawed the sand.  
Till suddenly strange longing grew  
in its breast for freedom, and it knew  
no peace, till cantering down the glade  
its fellows of the forest, made  
to share their furry company.  
So all the day long with the brown throng  
of the wild gazelle the tame would be,  
ever returning as night fell  
to sleep secure where its lord did dwell.  
But soon the lord said : ‘ Where then is fled  
the slim gazelle that I love so well ? ’  
And his servants told him, and when he knew  
he sent his huntsmen, and they slew  
full many of the wild gazelle,  
and the tame led back that it should dwell  
chained in the courtyard of that lord.  
Thus would it be if you followed me,

O Prince, to the desert, since the sword  
your father wields would sever us,  
would slay my fellows and ensure  
for him damnation swift and sure.  
But you and I are now placed thus  
that both are safe upon the shore,  
nor plunge to seek for danger more.  
Thus a swimmer once and his dear friend  
sought on a summer day the river  
which flowing gently past did ever  
smile as to say : ' Ay, come and spend  
some minutes in my emerald shallows,  
come where the grass waves by the bank,  
come to the shade of the bowing shallows.'  
They plunged ; one swam, but the other sank,  
for though the water seemed not deep,  
yet 'neath the weeds green fathoms keep  
the secret of its treachery  
hid by that wavering canopy.  
In vain the friend the current clove,  
caught at the weeds and wildly strove.  
Thereat the swimmer drew him near  
and his heart felt a double fear,  
first for his friend lest he should drown,  
next for himself that if he came  
within his frantic reach the same  
would drag them both for ever down.  
Therefore he touched him not, but cried :  
' Swim steadily, swim by my side,  
fear not, but strike out as I say.'  
Thus did the friend, and in that way  
both came to shore ; as you and I  
will win the shore if you follow me,  
but cling not close, lest now you bring  
both to the death."  
Thus having spoken and explored



the regions of the faith of the Lord,  
Barlaam withdrew to the hostelry ;  
and Zardan coming hastily  
asks of the Prince if true it be  
that the merchant is a monk's disguise,  
the previous stone his merchandise  
the faith of the Christians? And the Prince  
answers him : " Ay, and if you will  
you shall hear this babbler talk his fill.  
Retire behind the golden curtain  
when next he comes and thus convince  
yourself of all : but be you certain  
that as the murmur of sea-shells  
sounds in my ear the tale he tells."  
So Zardan, as the Prince had bid,  
behind the golden curtain hid  
on the morrow when the hermit came.  
And Joasaph said : " I pray thee, Father,  
that in one handful I may gather  
those blossoms which have Faith for name."  
Then Barlaam told how we must love  
God only all things far above  
with all our heart and soul and mind  
and keep His law with love and fear,  
who made the visible earthly sphere,  
and the world invisible far and near.  
And thus and thus did Barlaam bind  
the various flowers of the faith ;  
then sought again his hostelry.  
Alone with Zardan, Joasaph saith :  
" Full vainly spake he of the faith  
which maketh again and gainsayeth."  
Thereat said Zardan, " Wherefore try  
the truth of your servant, your ally?  
Full well I knew that in you grew  
the words of the prophet, and indeed

fain would I follow where you lead  
but weak my feet as my faith ; and the King  
drop by drop my blood will wring  
from my writhing body, who brought the stranger  
into your Highness's own chamber."

Then Joasaph answered : " No reward  
equals the knowledge of the Lord ;  
therefore it was I hid you here,  
and from your speech, alas, 'tis clear  
you are weak indeed. But for the King ;  
I pray you say not anything  
of Barlaam nor the faith, till reason  
shall find for me a fitting season  
all to explain." (But with the sot  
like seed on water prosper not  
the words of wisdom.) On the morrow,  
came with the sunrise, full of sorrow,  
Barlaam to say farewell. Again  
the Prince embraced him, and in vain  
he prayed the saint to take of gold  
at least so much as his hand would hold.  
But Barlaam would not ; " For," said he,  
" such things do not exist for me  
save by the order of God ; I go  
back to the desert where we know  
not gold from silver save by the glow  
of the sand in the sun or the clouds on high,  
sailing serene in silver by."

But seeing the Prince was very sad  
he did him off the robe he wore  
and the Prince his, and each stood clad  
in the robe of the other. " More, far more,  
than cloth of silver or cloth of gold  
this robe to me," said Joasaph ;  
" for in every seam, in every fold  
of you a memory it hath,

like the leaves of a book which in its creases  
speak of the giver and ever pleases  
the heavy heart of the absent one.”  
Then Barlaam raised his hand and prayed  
to God the Father and the Son  
and the Holy Ghost that they should aid  
the young vine planted, and accord  
that fruit of justice it afford ;  
comforting it and setting free  
from the devil’s wiles and, “ May it be,  
O Lord, inheritor, even with me  
of everlasting joys that art  
through all the ages throned apart.”  
Having thus his orison completed  
and Joasaph for the last time greeted,  
he left the palace thanking God  
that not in vain his feet had trod  
the devious paths of a strange land.  
Now Zardan, weak and led away  
by the thought of the King, could not withstand  
his conscience crying night and day—  
“ Thou hast been faithless to thy trust.”  
Then sickening as all mortals must  
when a secret sorrow rends and tears,  
Zardan resigned his charge and the cares  
of the watch of the Prince. When Abenner knew  
that Zardan ailed, he came to view  
his servant ailing and to know  
the cause wherefrom his ailment grew.  
Then Zardan’s heart did overflow,  
and “ Sire,” he cried, “ red death alone  
can for my fearsome fault atone.  
A merchant with a precious stone  
I brought to the Prince, but brought a lie,  
monk Barlaam, Christian, and the Prince  
his artful speeches did convince

of the Christian faith ; now let me die,  
who am worthless, traitor to my King.”  
Abenner frowned and his mind did wring  
to find the issue of this thing.  
At last for Araches he sent,  
and asked him as his friend how best  
he should purge his son of the Christian pest.  
Araches smiled and wheeling went  
his mind as a falcon beats around  
the quarry’s bushy hiding-place.  
At last he spake : “ Now from thy face,  
great King, drive sorrow, for I have found  
two ways, whereof if one should fail,  
for sure the other will prevail.  
Therefore send soldiers who shall seek  
monk Barlaam, and if he be caught  
full soon the Prince shall see how weak  
is the Christian faith ; for with good cheer,  
or else with torments, or with fear,  
this monk to recreance shall be brought.  
But if perchance he should escape  
our vigilance, just such a shape  
hath the mage Nachor, who is wise  
in all the Christian lore of lies.  
*He shall be Barlaam*, him refute  
your priests and sages in dispute,  
and thus the wandering mind of the Prince  
his Barlaam’s failure shall convince  
that out of gossamer he tries  
to weave a ladder to the skies.”  
Soon said, soon done, but all in vain  
Barlaam they sought o’er hill and plain.  
Therefore went Araches by night  
towards Nachor where alone he dwelt,  
and as a monk was he to sight,  
but gave in the place of blessing blight.

In few words Araches made clear  
his part to him, and Nachor felt  
that the task induced was very light,  
for learned was he in Christian lore  
and nothing placed in the world before  
his vantage : " And the gold shall pelt  
on you in torrents, and the King  
grant all you ask, if you do this thing,"  
said Araches. So as agreed,  
Nachor was bound and in the prison  
thrown as a Christian with derision.  
And the King announced to all around  
that Barlaam the prophet being found,  
all Christians far and near indeed  
might fearless come and of the faith  
discourse, and to his son he saith :  
" Joasaph, now within my keep  
is Barlaam in a dungeon deep ;  
and me as father and as King  
you must obey in everything ;  
yet will I hear what Barlaam saith  
of the mystery of the Christian faith."  
Said the Prince : " May the will of the Lord be done,  
in Him my soul I do confide,  
with me His pity shall abide."  
Then heralds went, and every one  
summoned of Christian, pagan, Jew,  
to the great contest, and but few  
of the latter, and of Christians one,  
Barachias only, dared appear.  
A monk he was, who knew not fear,  
and by false Nachor stood like day  
which drives the mists of night away.  
And of the pagan's empty creed,  
great was the multitude indeed ;  
augurs, magicians and diviners,

and sophists who are lie refiners,  
pontiffs of vain idolatry,  
mages of India and Chaldee.  
Then from his lofty throne uprising  
spake Abenner, their throng despising :  
“ One Barlaam monk will now dispute  
the Christian faith. You will confute  
him and his deities utterly ;  
or *his* the victory and you die  
disgracefully, and all you own  
on the winds of heaven shall be sown.”  
Thus spake the King, and Joasaph  
said, “ Sire, your speech much wisdom hath,  
let it be even as you say.”  
Then turning him where Nachor stood :  
“ Barlaam,” he said (for still he feigned  
that he in ignorance remained,  
though clear the fraud to him as day),  
“ From the gods my country holds most good,  
you by your honeyed words have turned me  
to follow the Christian creed and earned me  
my Father’s wrath and great distress,  
who once did live in happiness.  
Now hangs your life in the wavering scale ;  
which side it leaneth lies with you,  
who are alike the weighed and the weigher.  
Either you prove Christ’s doctrine true  
before each pagan vain gainsayer,  
and I in the faith will never fail  
and all my life through Christ adore  
even as you taught me once before ;  
or you are conquered—truth or fraud  
it matters not—for with these hands  
your heart I’ll tear and your false tongue  
forth from your body and afford  
at least a meal to the dog that stands

in the plain below." Thus Nachor, flung  
into the net for another wove,  
pondered awhile and pondering chose  
to cleave to the Prince, for well he knew,  
that the threats as the deeds of the Prince were true.

When all was ready, one stood forth  
of the pagan crowd and cried : " Are you  
Barlaam, the Christian hermit, who  
has spoken lies and dared the wrath  
of the King Abenner, lord of Ind,  
teaching his son that man has sinned,  
and through Christ Jesus crucified  
alone he can be purified ?

Methinks that the gods of the cloudy mountain,  
the gods of the field and the gods of the fountain,  
are better than Christ Jesus tied  
to a vile cross, pierced with a sword in the side.

As though a God who cannot save  
himself, to others gave  
the strength to vanquish and be strong,  
the joy of life and dance and song."

Then, like the ass of Balaam, broke  
Nachor the silence and thus spoke :

" Sire, by the providence of God  
this sphere of earth my feet have trod,  
and I have looked into the skies,  
and strained my poor and mortal eyes  
unto the heavenly mysteries,  
and thus I knew that God alone  
moved all, for the moved is ever less  
than is the mover ; therefore I  
rejecting vain idolatry  
declare the God who oft has shown  
libation and live sacrifice,  
to be detestable in His eyes ;

no part He hath in visible things,  
but in Him all have their beginnings."  
Thus much of the true faith he spake  
and the three pagan creeds he brake  
into Chaldæan, Greek, Egyptian ;  
“ for each of these is the great captain  
of many lesser which do fashion  
upon those models human passion.  
Now the elements to the Chaldee  
are gods, and in their honour he  
carves statues from the plastic stone,  
which statues by the ages mown  
lie shattered in the sand : ‘ the sky  
is God,’ forsooth, these pagans cry ;  
though the stars move from sign to sign,  
and the sky is by the work divine  
of the one great artificer.  
The earth a goddess ! when on her  
the vilest of creation stamp,  
she whom the yellow fire consumeth,  
who rots corrupted by the damp,  
she who the blood of all the slain  
must in her foetid sides contain,  
she whom the moody sexton doometh  
with his vile pick to embrace the bones  
of lepers perished, she who owns  
no better claim to Godhead than  
does water soiled by beast and man.  
Fire too they claim for God, and bear  
her here and there and everywhere,  
make her at will or great or small,  
and roast their venison withal !  
The Sun they worship, who must rise,  
and setting every night he dies,  
who is far smaller than the sky,  
and like the stars by law divine



must move in turn from sign to sign.  
The Moon a Goddess ! who must lie  
under eclipse and wax and wane  
and come to the same place again  
by heavenly law, no Goddess she—  
pale handmaiden of the powers that be.  
And man they worship ; man whose mood  
changes from hour to hour, now good  
now bad, now coward now courageous,  
now buoyed up with a pride outrageous—  
then hurled to earth, in vain repents—  
man formed of varying elements,  
wearer of raiment, piteous man,  
whose utmost life is scarce a span.  
Now, an your Highness will, I speak  
after the Chaldee, of the Greek.  
More madly foolish they than those,  
as greater sin from greatness grows.  
They find their deities everywhere,  
in woods and streams and faces fair,  
in storms and seas and shameful faces,  
that all which in themselves debases  
may find ensample and escape  
in the high gods, who sin the same,  
and mortals sinning dare not blame—  
murder, adultery, and rape,  
and crimes too evil for a name.  
Saturn their elder god is he  
who lay with Rhea and did devour  
his children till the fateful hour  
came Jupiter and gelding him  
did cast his members on the sea  
(whereof rose Venus fair and slim);  
and Saturn bound to Hades hurled—  
his Father ! with the early world.  
A god in chains ! what sorry fable,

which to believe what man were able ?  
Jupiter king of the Gods they claim,  
and shapes of beast and shapes half human  
and shapes of animals without shame  
he took to enjoy mere mortal woman.  
He bare Europa as a bull  
upon his back, and the tower full  
of gold betrayed his Danae,  
Leda the swan, Antiope  
the satyr, lightning Semele,  
and many children by all these  
and others had he—Hercules,  
Bacchus, Apollo, Amphion,  
Perseus, Sarpedon, every one  
a bastard, and daughters full a score,  
Diana, Helen, and those nine  
men call the Muses, and indeed  
make mention too of Ganymede !  
The fair youth pourer of the wine,  
pourer of wine and somewhat more.  
Vulcan the blacksmith they create  
a god who holds within his hands  
nails and a hammer, God and poor !  
like mortal man the slave of fate,  
else wherefore such a trade endure ?  
and lame withal, and loving Venus,  
who such a lover scarce withstands !  
Then Mercury, a subtle thief,  
and an enchanter ; Esculapius  
the leech, the bruiser of the leaf,  
mixer of potions, slain with thunder  
by Jove who loved the Spartan ; wonder  
indeed where all his healing lay !  
And Mars the god who stole away  
the sheep, and fell to loving Venus ;  
' Come,' says Cupido, ' and between us,

Vulcan, we'll bind the amorous god.'  
Sheep-stealer, warrior, lover chained,  
what paths has not your godhead trod ?  
And yet such monster is not disdained  
by the mad Greeks, and to Bacchus even  
do they accord a place in heaven—  
madman, adulterer, fugitive, slave,  
drunkard, soon hunted to the grave  
by the Titans. And one drunkard more  
I yet must add to the long score  
—Hercules, murderer of his children,  
who burned himself—and God Apollo,  
a minstrel bearing case and bow.  
Hark, to his harping, even when  
the people pass, with wreathèd smile,  
behold this gipsy god beguile  
the simple folk, a god foretelling  
the future in their cross-lined palms !  
A penniless god reduced to selling  
his very deity for alms.  
Ay, let him harp and ne'er so sweetly,  
in hell his friends shall burn full meetly !  
Diana chasing in the wood  
the deer and boar ! ha ! ha ! 'twere good  
to find divinity in her,  
and yet those fools her worship share  
among the rest. See Venus rise  
wanton from ocean, in her eyes,  
blue, blue and moist with the sea's brine  
is lust enough to turn to swine  
all Circe spared, for paramour  
now Mars now Vulcan, gentle or boor,  
it matters not, so oft she change.  
Her loves among the mortals range ;  
now mad for dark Anchises she  
makes toil for him the very sea,

now fair Adonis whom the boar  
slew, and his mistress doth adore  
to madness, seeking hill and vale  
in vain, and now must crave of pale  
Persephone, and storms and cries  
for the lost violet of his eyes.

Ay, weeping wanton, ay, Adonis,  
in hell indeed your double throne is.  
Ay, dwell thou there, immortal killed  
Ay, follow him, thou goddess filled  
with all iniquity. Thus, Sire,  
are the Greeks sunk in evil dire,  
mimicking those who make of hell  
a place where even gods may dwell  
But now the Egyptian cult behold,  
more mad than these a thousand fold ;  
for while Chaldea adores the star  
rising at even, and the Greek  
at least in human form doth seek  
his God, the vile Egyptians are  
sunk to the worship of the brute,  
the plant, the tree, and are defiled  
with evil upon evil piled :

—a pyramid which hath its root  
in the mire of life : first they adored  
Isis, whose brother and whose lord  
Osiris was, whom Typhon slew,  
—brother his brother—and Isis knew  
no peace and with her infant son  
Horus to Biblis fled and sought  
Osiris in her grief distraught ;  
till Horus, come to man's estate,  
slew Typhon. Thus these gods each one  
are weaklings and must bow to fate ;  
—Isis is helpless to regain  
husband and brother, Typhon slain

must pass to the underworld. In pain  
and infelicity and death  
these gods must draw their mortal breath ;  
yet these the Egyptians do adore,  
these and as many strange gods more  
as they may hear of and god-brutes  
their vain idolatry salutes—  
sheep, goat, calf, pig, ram, crocodile,  
vulture, hawk, eagle, aspic, dragon,  
wolf, monkey, cat, and all things vile ;  
these worship they, these call upon  
for aid in war, these though they rot,  
are slain and eaten, know they not  
for false ; and ah ! it marvels me  
that Greek, Egyptian, and Chaldee,  
seeing his gods forged, beaten, hewn,  
consumed with time, their numbers strewn  
to the four winds, can yet believe.  
And an ill turn have their poets done,  
thinking to praise them as they weave  
their fables, for if God be one  
then in His parts is unity.  
But if the gods the gods pursue,  
ravish and murder ; then 'tis true  
from wills divided, wills malign,  
such motions spring, and none can be  
held god of all their company.  
Last, of the Jews of Abraham's line  
dwelling in Egypt ; these the Lord  
succoured and saved by Aaron and Moses ;  
but vile, they slay with reckless sword  
the prophets, and all their pleasure is  
in following the Gentile's gods,  
and when Christ Jesus walked on earth,  
of the Virgin born in stainless birth,  
outraged and bound and scourged with rods,

they delivered Him to Pontius Pilate,  
the Roman governor, their hate  
grown stronger with each benefit  
which on their thankless heads had lit.  
And now one God omnipotent  
they do adore, but not as meant  
by the holy writings, for they are  
from the true faith strayed almost as far  
as are the Gentiles. But Christ Jesus,  
Son of great God sent down for us,  
born of the Virgin without fleck  
by the Holy Spirit, for our sake  
made flesh, to Him we bow the neck,  
we Christians, who came to take  
our sins on Him, and crucified  
in mortal flesh, on the Cross He died ;  
and rose on the third day again,  
conqueror of hell and death and pain,  
with His held converse forty days,  
then rose before their eyes to Heaven.  
In Him believe we, Him we praise,  
and with the Trinity engraven  
within our hearts, to Him we look,  
and if you study but the Book,  
you will come to the knowledge of God, His Son,  
and the Holy Spirit, Three in One ”  
Thus ended Nachor, but from all  
the pagans present, slight and small,  
came the answer to his argument,  
like sea-birds railing at the sea.  
Then raged Abenner mightily  
against the sages ; some he smote  
in the face, the robes of others rent,  
and some he drave forth to be scourged ;  
in the eyes of others slaves rubbed soot,  
and still the King his fury urged,

but yet spared Nachor, having sworn  
the Christians safe, and dreaming still  
that, left with Joasaph, he will  
yet wean him from the faith new-born.  
But Nachor now, with Joasaph,  
came to the palace, and was safe  
from the pagan crowd that followed them  
with curses smothered at the hem  
of the Prince's robe : then said the Prince :  
“ Nachor, I marvelled ever since  
your speech began, for well I knew  
your face, and wondered what strange lies  
your evil wisdom might devise.  
Ah, well I saw your misery through  
the golden garb which covered you ;  
yet were your words as words of fire,  
such as the tongues of flame inspire.  
And now I give you for reward  
the mightiest gift I can afford.”  
Then Joasaph declared the faith,  
and Nachor harkened (for his defence  
armed with celestial eloquence,  
had been as the prayer that a child saith  
after its nurse), and, “ I hear ! I hear !  
Now see I with the blinded eye  
of the heart which the Ancient Enemy  
pierced in his malice ; but ah ! I fear  
too old am I in every sin  
the gates of Heaven to enter in,”  
wept Nachor ; but Joasaph, “ God at need  
can of these stones raise Abraham's seed.  
And come they at tierce, sext, noon, or vespers,  
or come they at dawn with the sparrow's whispers,  
so they have worked in the Father's vineyard,  
each labourer hath the like reward.”  
Thus he raised up Nachor, and comforted him,

and with broken voice and with eyes yet dim  
thus spake that ancient penitent :

“Most noble Prince, from Heaven sent  
to be my Saviour, now the jewel  
I hold in my hand, and life as fuel  
of sacrifice and penitence

I would offer to the only God.

So an it please you, hastening hence,  
I will seek the desert wastes untrod,  
striving with sorrow, penitence, pain,  
some meed of virtue to attain,  
while yet life lasts.” Then Joasaph

thanked God, whose infinite pity hath  
a thousand ways to touch and heal,  
embraced the veteran, who did steal  
forth from the town, by all unseen,  
till in the desert a monk he found  
who dwelt in a cave beneath the ground.

Him as of old the Magdalene  
fell Nachor the sandalled feet before,  
and weeping many a bitter tear,  
for holy baptism he did crave.

This with due preparation gave  
the holy man, and in the cave  
dwelt with him Nachor many a year,  
worshipping God in love and fear ;  
then went he happy to the grave.

Meanwhile, in sorry plight they were,  
mages and sages, for Abenner  
grew daily in the cult more cold,  
nor sacrificed he as of old,  
and many a goat and sheep and ox,  
lord of the herd, pearl of the flocks,  
did low his last or bleated fast,  
while the white-robed theories passed,  
all destitute of majesty ;



and the King not even deigned to cast  
a glance towards those gods whose glory  
was now for him but a children's story,  
heard half his life by some strange fate,  
then changed at the last for something great,  
beyond his habits and his heart.  
For Abenner's life in chiefest part  
merged in the dizzying joys of sense,  
which of all joys are most intense ;  
drunk not with wine, but with desire,  
"held by the thorn," as saith Isaiah.  
Hence the King wavered as drew near  
the greatest festival of the year,  
and the priests of the pagans were in fear  
lest he might let the season pass  
nor make an offering, and thus be lost  
the cult for ever. Now there was  
one man in the kingdom, Theodas,  
could work on the mind of the King, for most  
Abenner loved him, called him friend,  
and further showered without an end  
honours upon him, but Theodas  
dwelt apart in a lone cavern,  
where many devils and souls that burn  
waited his orders ; for he was  
a great magician, and the Cross  
his enemy. So when they came  
and besought him with each winning name  
that he would deign to wean the King  
from the God of the Christians, the thing  
seemed to him pleasant ; wherefore tracing  
marks in the sand, and therein pacing,  
called he on Ashtaroth, Astarte,  
and his other gods that they should be  
with him to aid, and all the legion  
flocked round of lesser fiends, that the air

was thick and black as is despair,  
when the city gates before them shone  
Then at a sign these evil things  
did hide themselves with airy wings,  
while with a palm branch in his hand,  
wearing a goatskin, Theodas  
came to the place where the King was.  
Smiling, he bowed, and, "Sire, I come  
to wish you joy for the Christian band  
by your philosophers made dumb;  
and if it please you now would pray  
that youths and maidens passing fair,  
and sheep and oxen and incense rare,  
we offer to the gods to-day,  
since by their aid the deadly lie  
of Jesus Christ to-day will die."  
Then Abenner: "Alas, dear friend, not so;  
the Christian triumphed. But let blood flow  
till a crimson veil the altar covers.  
Perchance the gods did hunt or travel,  
or quaffing deep ambrosial mead,  
they did forget Abenner's need,  
and thus my fool philosophers  
the Christian's lies could not unravel."  
Then the King made sign, and victims' groans  
again made weep the granite stones.  
Then said Abenner, "Theodas,  
you are my friend, you are more wise  
than the cat of Egypt in whose eyes  
all of the past and future lies.  
Prince Joasaph to plague me has  
declared him for the creed of death,  
taught him by Barlaam, monk, whose breath  
makes freeze the very blood in my bones,  
then surge again in waves of fire.  
Now an your wit can find a way

to bring him back to the light of day,  
as once the queen of all desire  
her boy from Hades, turkis stones  
and margarets shall adorn the base,  
and a heaven of sapphires fill the space  
of the flowing robe of the statue raised  
in gold to Theodas, whose face  
shall ever smile on the King's palace,  
and ever bear this legend traced :  
' Here lieth Theodas, who led  
Prince Joasaph back from the dead.' ”  
Then Theodas, having taken counsel  
with the abysmal things of evil  
which waited on him in the air,  
his thought did place before the King,  
but subtly he draped the devilish thing  
in robes of fable, seeming fair.  
“ Once to a King in his old age  
a son was born to be his heir,  
and the King's own Astrologer  
with globe and circle did engage  
to cast the Prince's horoscope.  
When this was done : ‘ There is no hope,’  
said the astrologer, ‘ that your son,  
my liege, will ever see the sun,  
save in a dark secluded chamber  
where never a ray of light shall enter ;  
for lustres twain he shall remain,  
till the Bull ride free of the Crab again  
(so fickle in their vagaries are  
the body's humours, and the star  
which reigns at birth).’ So was it done,  
and when the invisible years had run,  
said the King : ‘ 'Tis time that the Prince wide-eyed  
the joys of the beautiful world espied.’  
Therefore they gathered jewels and arms,

chariots and horses, that enchant  
the eyes of youth, all save the greatest  
fair women with their thousand charms.  
And the Prince on his white elephant  
passed down the flowered streets of the town,  
and of each sight preferred the latest ;  
till by him went some fair women.  
'What are those things that are not men?'  
queried the Prince ; 'Why, dæmons they  
born and bred to lead men astray,'  
answered the guides, as back they led  
the Prince to the palace ; and the King said :  
'Of all those beautiful things, which one  
do you the most desire, my son ?'  
Then said the Prince, 'Pardie, I find  
the dæmons most are to my mind.'"  
"Full oft before this day, I trow,  
for the Prince was broken the virgin's vow,"  
quoth Theodas, "but find a girl  
who shall be fair as a pure pearl,  
and tempt him with her night and day,  
and let no man come near to him,  
but ever in the stilled and dim  
and scented corridors let play  
the maiden's robes, and they shall draw  
the Prince back to the world once more."  
Thus counselled Theodas, and the King  
bethought him that the dice of war  
had thrown a royal maid to him  
whom he might use as a plaything.  
A maid she was both fair and slim,  
white as a lily, and her eyes,  
nor large, nor small, shone in such wise  
as none dared long to look on them.  
Her smooth face filled her oval mirror  
as a picture framed, the lips of her

were red and thin like rose on stem,  
red and white petalled when she smiled ;  
trim curls in sparse arrangement clomb  
the golden barrier of the comb  
which held them prisoners in rows ;  
her ears had echo's self beguiled  
to tiny secrets, and her nose  
dwelt like that flower amid the snows,  
which clings upon the precipice,  
yet being perfect is as fair  
as snowflakes in the rare clear air.  
Her mind was all that evil is.  
Such was this princess, and she came  
upon the mission of her shame,  
humbly clad as a handmaiden,  
bearing upon a golden plate  
grapes and a cloven pomegranate,  
and kneeling before the Prince she said :  
“ My Lord, who art the flower of men,  
ah ! pity me, a captive led,  
a princess royal in distress.  
Ah ! sad my fate, and often I  
have all but had the strength to die,  
who am weary of living as a slave.  
Methinks that the Christian God should save  
my soul an he cared, but who can care  
for a slave princess, though ne'er so fair ? ”  
Thereat she gathers in her eyes  
a tear or twain, and Joasaph cries ;  
“ Woman, believe in God, be bride  
of Jesus Christ who was crucified  
to save the world ” ; and told of Eve,  
whom once the serpent did deceive,  
how from the garden she must fly  
and once immortal yet must die  
by her own sin ; but now no heed

gave the maiden to the Prince, for she  
with the spirit of evil secretly  
communed, and then she spake indeed  
as with his tongue : " O sweet my lord,  
if you would save my soul, accord  
the boon she craves to your handmaiden.  
Let this couch be our marriage bed."  
Then Joasaph : " Woman, all in vain  
is your request, though I would fain  
rescue your soul, but unpolluted  
I have sworn since baptism to remain."  
Then she with thin lips downward curving,  
her flower-poised head on her shoulders swerving,  
" Ah ! Prince, what I ask is not all evil ;  
for Christian books I have read and heard :  
' stainless is marriage and honourable.'  
And ' those whom marriage hath joined together,  
let them remain so joined for ever.'  
And have the ancient prophets erred ?  
is the Scripture written to beguile ?  
when Peter, prince of the Church, took wife ?  
and with her dwelt he all his life ;  
therefore doth marriage not defile."  
" Woman, you speak the truth," he said,  
" honourable is the marriage bed,  
but for those in baptism reborn,  
who to the Almighty God have sworn  
to remain always virgin, pure,  
so long as life on earth endure,  
such is impossible." Then said she :  
" My Prince, even as you say, let be,  
but grant me yet this only prayer,  
to clasp me in your arms to-night,  
and with the first of the morning light  
I will deny the gods, I swear,  
and become Christian ; think of me,

a soul nigh lost eternally,  
whom you may save ; the joy in Heaven  
over one sinner saved they say  
is greater than for righteous seven ;  
and think of Timothy whom Paul  
did circumcise that he might stay  
the greater evil with the small.”  
Thus tempted him this subtle maid,  
urged by the dæmon who is learned  
as any monk in holy writ.  
And in his veins the proud blood burned  
and all his senses for her yearned,  
exquisitely pleading there  
with eyes, lips, tongue and body swayed  
as a flame wavers in the air.  
Then fell the Prince on his knees and prayed :  
“ O Lord, in Thee hath Joasaph trusted ;  
let him not be discomfited.”  
And as he prayed sleep came to him  
and touched those long curved lashes dim  
with tears and strife ; and sleepless thus  
descended Angels and they bore  
him to a garden marvellous,  
adorned with trees whose foliage made  
sweet music, and a rivulet wound  
curve upon curve in the cool shade,  
and groups celestial sitting round,  
conversed, a heavenly company.  
And Joasaph aye wondered more ;  
and as he went he seemed to be  
within the walls of a fair city ;  
resplendent, litten from above  
with a light which seemed both light and love.  
And in this place for every breath  
he would have died an earthly death,  
and musing as he walked he saith :



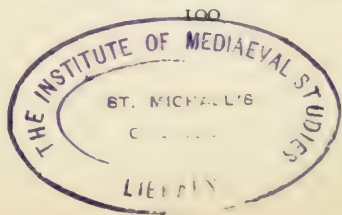
“ I will remain for ever here  
beneath the shadow of the trees,  
or in the city wandering  
will harken to the speech of these,  
which is most heavenly sweet and clear ;  
and mayhap with long sojourning  
I shall come like them, fair as they,  
and know the manner of their speech,  
and hear the wisdom which they teach.”  
Then a voice sounded in his ear :  
“ Mayhap upon a distant day  
with sorrow, sweat and travail borne  
you may come hither, but not near  
is your mortality outworn ;  
watch then and pray, for many a year.”  
Sudden the Prince was carried thence,  
hurtling through air, till in his face  
struck a foul odour, and he stood  
upon the brink of a dark place,  
which reeked as though with pestilence ;  
where as worms coil in rotten wood  
legions of dæmons bit and tore  
and healed and tortured evermore  
the loathsome bodies of the lost.  
Then the spirit took him back again  
and feverish on his couch he tost,  
fearful of hell and hellish pain,  
craving for Paradise amain.  
So the King feared lest he should die,  
and Theodas sent that he should try  
to heal him with his wizardry.  
But ere the dread magician trod  
the palace steps, Prince Joasaph knew  
the advent of the foe of God  
by all his airy fiends attended.  
As a blow in his face these words he threw :



"Hark, thou abode of sin abysmal,  
 blacker than darkness palpable,  
 thou seed of Babylon descended  
 from those that built the tower Chaldæan,  
 by which the whole world went astray;  
 meat for the flames, thou beast unclean,  
 which turns the traveller from his way.  
 Thou spawn of hell, dost thou not know  
 that the sun shines on all below  
 indifferently, and metals grow  
 from black to red in the bright flame,  
 nor are the metals nor the sun  
 therefore defiled?—thus Jesus came  
 and on the cross a death of shame  
 for mortals suffered every one."  
 "But if He be the most High God!"  
 said Theodas, "wherefore did He choose  
 from the vile people of the Jews  
 twelve of the vilest, wherefore trod  
 a land remote?" Then the Prince: "Thou art  
 the ass who heard the harp resound  
 in music sweet, yet cropped the ground,  
 unconscious of the melody,  
 which found no echo in his heart  
 or the aspic who will stop his ear,  
 lest he the charmer's song shall hear.  
 Ay! if the Ethiopian change his skin,  
 or the leopard his diversity,  
 then mayest thou change thy coat of sin:  
 and the heaven and the earth shall pass away,  
 but My word shall remain alway.  
 Ye harken not to the fishermen,  
 to the heavenly trumpeters sent to men,  
 but think that the images once made  
 to adorn the memory of the brave,  
 since those lost times have ever stayed

as gods with us to slay or save.  
For the dæmons who are crafty folk  
seeing that here somehow was smoke,  
themselves indeed supplied the fire,  
haunting the statues and deceiving  
with lies the faith of the believing,  
thereafter damned to anguish dire.  
Thus these things were till Christ descended  
and those that willed their errors mended.  
By the word of the Lord were the skies established,  
and of His Spirit He created  
all things that in the world exist.”  
Then Theodas, having heard with wonder  
these words of wisdom, made no answer,  
but as one struck with sudden thunder,  
knew the Lord, and his soul had sight,  
and he would strive to reach the light.  
Therefore in council : “ Truth,” he cried,  
doth with Prince Joasaph abide.  
Great is the Christian’s God, and great  
their faith and their mysteries excellent.”  
Then turning to Joasaph, “ Too late  
I come,” he said, “ but others may  
follow thee on the holy way,  
and learn to fly the road I went.”  
“ Not so,” said the Prince, “ but as a son  
returning from a distant land  
whom grasps his father by the hand,—  
thus God will welcome every one  
though he come but when life is almost done.”  
Thus Joasaph spoke, and on Abenner  
gazed all the ministers of state.  
Deep sunk in thought he pondered there,  
and the breath of the councillors as they sat  
waiting his verdict vibrated  
like the weighing scales which hesitate

till the full measure of the weight  
weighs one side down. Then towards them turned,  
with changèd voice these words he said :  
“ My lieges, in the lapse of time  
full many a noble city falls,  
whereof the tracing of the walls  
which once to Heaven rose sublime  
scarcely at all may be discerned,  
and as of cities, so of kings,  
whose puissance from the high gods springs ;  
they have their budding time, their June,  
their fervid summer, but too soon  
comes autumn with that scythe of his,  
and soon is winter shivering there,  
—old age with snowflakes in his hair.  
And since even kings and kingdoms end,  
it may be that the gods too wane,  
mayhap we sacrifice in vain,  
adoring dying deities,  
while with the young, new god to friend  
all-golden-haired prosperities  
may on my kingdom come again.  
Therefore to my beloved son  
Prince Joasaph, whom all men love,  
the province Antelar I give,  
of all my lands the fairest one.  
There let him dwell, and in each grove  
he shall worship Jesus Christ the while,  
and thus for five years he shall live,  
and if perchance the new god smile,  
and the land and its folk be prosperous,  
then everywhere it shall be thus  
as in Antelar, for I would serve  
those gods alone who can preserve,  
whose arm is long to heal or harm ;  
they are wiser than the wisest kings,



whose power the span of a lifetime rings.”  
Thus spake Abenner, and Joasaph sighed,  
but thither went where his sire him sent.  
And in a year Abenner died,  
and the folk of his kingdom loudly cried  
for the gods who were in Antelar,  
since there the folk were happier far  
and richer too than anywhere  
in all the land of Abenner.  
So Joasaph came from Antelar,  
and all the nations near and far  
sent embassies with presents rare,  
and he was crowned King of the land.  
Now his first thought when gathered there  
the ambassadors in order stand,  
was how the Christian faith should reach  
everywhere in the land of each.  
Therefore he called Barachias  
(the same as once with Nachor was).  
Barachias said : “ In Antelar  
a thousand youthful Christians are ;  
let us send them forth to preach the word  
to your subjects who have never heard  
even the name of Christ.” And so  
forth went the sowers for to sow  
the seed that sprung in Antelar.  
And myriad heads of Christian corn  
sprung from the clay of a creed outworn.  
But soon the Prince of power grew tired,  
and soon with all his soul desired  
Barlaam his friend once more to greet,  
to sit once more at the hermit’s feet.  
Therefore he took his golden crown  
and gave it to Barachias,  
who as the new King crownèd was,  
and as night fell he left the town

mounted upon his steed alone,  
and faring through the forest lone  
there met him in a moongirt space  
a maiden with a magic face,  
and moving as she walked the air  
the Princess stood beside him there.  
Uncoiled her ruinous tresses shone,  
sunlight and moonlight mixed in one,  
down from the storehouse of the skies  
twin stars had come into her eyes,  
her lips, the gates of Paradise,  
half opened as she smiled and said :  
“ O Joasaph, our marriage bed  
within this forest glade is spread ;  
come, I am made of earth and heaven,  
or only earth, or only heaven,  
and as you will, so shall be given  
such joys as tasted once make seem  
the bliss you seek an empty dream ;  
with me to feel the fires of hell  
were heaven, without me heaven were hell.”  
But stronger Joasaph as she  
was fairer, and he passed her by  
nor harkened to the barbed cry  
she uttered as she saw him flee.  
Then as the morning light first drew  
those veils of hers from off the day,  
hunger and thirst King Joasaph knew ;  
and from the branches of a tree  
which bowed toward him on his way  
he plucked the fruit, and lo, a voice  
came from the tree : “ Rejoice, rejoice,  
my fruit is plucked by Joasaph  
who in him all the virtues hath.”  
Onward fared Joasaph, and the sun  
blazed in the heaven as he passed

those green spiked shrubs which are the last  
to fringe the desert when is done  
the forest's due, but lo ! from one  
sprang forth a tiger, which did stand  
barred black and yellow in the sand,  
roaring on Joasaph, but he  
passed toward the desert evenly,  
smiling that such a monster roared  
against the freedman of the Lord,  
as though the fear of bodily pain  
could conquer him 'gainst whom were vain  
the magic face, the magic spell.  
Now nigh the spot doth Barlaam dwell,  
where is the only desert well,  
and where the one wide-spreading palm  
gives food and shelters from the harm  
of the angry sun, and Joasaph  
to guide his steps the vision hath  
of the old saint who sleeps and prays  
and joins the circle of his days.  
Thus each met other, and the rest  
with the desert sand is covered best,  
as were their bodies when they passed  
hand in hand to the Lord at the last.



PART III

THE MEETING OF THE  
CREEDS

ARGUMENT

*AL ZOBEIR, his Mohammedan host, thanks John of Damascus for the legend—suddenly an Æthiopian, called in the narrative ‘Man of Ind’ (though he is not an Indian, but an African who has been in India and become converted to Buddhism), breaks in upon the discussion—he asserts that the tale of Barlaam and Joasaph is really Buddhism, not Christianity—he states some of the main tenets of Buddhism—John of Damascus retorts angrily—Al Zobeir, however, begs the Æthiopian Buddhist to tell him more of Buddhism—the Buddhist rises, and a dialogue ensues on the nature of the soul and of individuality—our deeds are our Karma or soul—no man can escape the consequences of his evil deeds—the Buddhist continues his narrative, briefly referring to the legend of Barlaam and Joasaph—the Buddha’s birth, youth, and marriage, and the birth of his son Rahula—the Buddha leaves his home, his wife Yashodora, and his child, making the Great Renunciation—his asceticism—he finds the middle way of moderation—his disciples leave him—he obtains complete insight beneath the bodhi tree—he is tempted vainly by Mara (the Great Enlightenment)—he*



goes to Benares—he teaches the people in the deer park—  
 his interview with his father, the King—the King's grief  
 at losing his son—the Buddha comforts his father—  
 Yashodora—her regrets at losing her husband—he visits  
 and blesses her—conversion of his son Rahula—the  
 Buddha leaves his home to preach—the Buddha's former  
 lives—the tale of Ambapali, the courtesan—how she  
 feasted the Buddha and outran the Lords of Vaishali  
 upon the noble eightfold path—the Æthiopian regrets  
 that he cannot discourse of the disciples of the Buddha,  
 nor speak at length of his teaching—he tells how the  
 Buddha came to the grove of the Mallas—he teaches  
 Ananda, his favourite disciple—having accomplished his  
 task of enlightening the world, he will seek the eternal  
 rest of Nirvana—he prophesies the coming of Buddha  
 Maitreya, the Buddha of kindness, within five hundred  
 years of his death—the Buddha speaks for the last time—  
 death of the Buddha—the heavens and the earth are con-  
 vulsed—the miraculous rain of mandara blossoms which  
 falls from heaven—the Mallas bear his body to Kusinara  
 —on the way they stop to permit a disciple to adore the  
 remains—the ambassadors from the seven kingdoms  
 demand each a share of the relics—the coming strife is  
 appeased by the quotation of the Buddha's words—the  
 ashes and the remains are divided—the Æthiopian con-  
 cludes—Al Zobeir speaks of the Arabs before the coming  
 of the Prophet—their customs and beliefs—the Prophet  
 has the first vision of Gabriel—and the second—he  
 preaches the faith of Islam—the first believers—the  
 Koreish (the aristocracy of Mecca) doubt and oppose the  
 Prophet, though he is one of their number—the Prophet  
 engages a poet to defend him against the satires of his  
 enemies—the flight from Mecca to Medina—Ali - incidents  
 of the flight—Bedr, the first battle of Islam, between the  
 Prophet, supported by the Companions and the Helpers

*(the Medinans) and the Meccans—victory of the Prophet—Medina fortified—the Prophet invites Heraclius, Emperor of the East, and the Chosrões (King) of Persia, to embrace Islam—they scornfully reject the offer—Khalid, the Sword of God, joins the Prophet—the Prophet surrounds Mecca—Mecca capitulates—the Prophet peacefully occupies Mecca—he grows rapidly old—he makes the last pilgrimage—he visits the tombs of his departed friends—he preaches for the last time in the mosque—his death—Aïcha watches him as he sleeps the last sleep—Al Zobeir speaks of the Faith—the Unity of God—the Koran—Adam—Eblis—the Fall—the Tent that was let down from Heaven—the Black Stone—Hagar and Ishmaël—Abraham builds the Temple with the help of Ishmaël—Eblis driven away—Gabriel teaches the rites—Abraham calls to all men to come and worship God—Patriarchs mentioned—Solomon and his horses—his flying carpet—his lapwing—Balkis, Queen of Saba, visits Solomon—her admiration for Solomon—the tale of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and their dog—Al Zobeir goes on to tell of the celestial hierarchy—Gabriel and the other angels—the jinn or genii—the giants—the Judgment Day—how sinners are beaten in their graves—soul and body are joined together again—the End of the World—signs and portents—Mansour denies that Christ will descend upon the white tower near Damascus—Al Zobeir and Mansour argue on the double nature of Christ—each accuses the other of idolatry—the Black Stone is for Islam divine as the Cross—the dispute becomes bitter—but friendship is superior even to creeds—Al Zobeir continues to speak of signs of the end of the world—the blasts blown on the trumpets which shall announce the Last Judgment—the Last Judgment—Mohammad alone of the Prophets will dare to intercede for the faithful—the body and soul of sinful man will plead each for his own salvation—both*

*will be damned--God will tell the story of the Blind and the Lamé before damning soul and body—Gabriel weighs the deeds of each in his scale—the bridge which leads to Paradise—how the Seven Hells are beneath it—Seven Hells mentioned—Hypocrites condemned to the lowest Hell—Al Araf, the wall between Heaven and Hell—how the blessed will enjoy sitting upon it and watching the pains of the damned—Abraham sits on the wall and converses with a former friend in torment—Abraham describes Paradise and its joys—he holds out hope that his friend may yet enter Paradise after many million years of torment—supreme bliss only obtained by certain of the blessed—Iman and Din, the halves of Islam, described—Al Zobeir is about to tell of Din, but is interrupted by the call to prayer—Din described—Mansour muses on his youth—he recalls his vision of the Blessed Virgin—Al Zobeir speaks of almsgiving—a tale of the test of generosity—the audience beg Al Zobeir to tell them of the events which occurred after the death of the Prophet—Al Zobeir consents—Omar's belief that the Prophet would never die—Abou Bekr proves this to be false—the Meccans, Abou Bekr and Omar, the friends of the Prophet, win the day, and secure the election of Abou Bekr to be Kaliph over all Islam, in despite of the opposition of the Medinans—the meeting hall of the Medinans—the struggle described—Abou Bekr elected Kaliph—the False Prophet Moseilama defeated by the general Khalid, the Sword of God, at the Battle of the Garden of Death—Khalid's remarkable wedding—Khalid advances on Persia—wins the Battle of the Chains—Tigris, Euphrates, and Babylon—their conversation—Khalid wins the Battle of Walaja—he encourages his soldiers with promise of booty—the Battle of the River of Blood—Khalid keeps his oath to the Lord—the Kaliph Abou Bekr's delight at receiving the immense spoil sent from Persia by Khalid—*

*Khalid continues his victories in Persia—Khalid leaves Persia, and visits Mecca secretly, to perform the duties of religion—he returns and meets his army at Hira—Heraclius, Emperor of the East, moves on Syria with a great army—levée en masse of the Faithful—Romans encamp on the plain Wacusa—they are blockaded by the Faithful—Khalid recalled from Persia—his marvellous march across the desert to Syria—the bramble-bush—he effects the junction of his force with the main army of Islam—he obtains supreme command—Battle of the Yermuk—total defeat of the Romans—death of Abou Bekr—Omar succeeds him as Kaliph—Khalid superseded in the command—the Faithful move on Damascus—Khalid's feat of arms—his discomfiture owing to treaty concluded by his military superior—Damascus capitulates—the Emperor flies northward, pursued by the Faithful—his farewell to the Holy Land—Fall of Jerusalem—Omar's magnanimous behaviour to the Christians—he founds the Mosque of Omar—disgrace of Khalid—due to private spite of Omar—wholly unmerited—lonely death of Khalid—Fighting in Persia—Battles of the Bridge, the Tens—Sad takes command of the new army and marches on Persia—an embassy sent to Yezdegird, King of Persia—the terms of Islam scornfully rejected—the Faithful encamp at Kadesia, on the Euphrates—Rustem commands the Persians—malady of Sad—First Day's battle—episode of Selma and Majain—doubtful issue of First Day—the Second Day—Cacaa's heroism—the flight of the Elephants—the Third Day's Battle—the issue still doubtful—the Night of Clangour—total defeat of the Persians—the death of Rustem—Yezdegird flies from his capital, Madain, which is occupied by the Faithful—his wonderful treasures—Yezdegird slain on the banks of the Oxus—Omar assassinated in Mecca—Othman succeeds him as Kaliph—weakness of Othman—Othman besieged*

*in his palace in Mecca—murder of Othman—Ali succeeds to the Kaliphate—revolt of Muavia, governor of Syria—Aïcha, widow of the Prophet—her intrigues—the Battle of the Camel in Persia—Ali victorious—Aïcha returns to Mecca—Ali's troubles with the faithless Kufans—he marches to meet Muavia—the Battle of Siffin—subtle dealing of Amrou—the Law of the Lord—Ali forced to cease fighting—arbitrators chosen between Ali and Muavia—they meet at Duma—Ali's representative outwitted by Amrou, Muavia's representative—Muavia called Kaliph of all Islam—Muavia, founder of the Ommyad dynasty reigning in Damascus and over all Islam at the date of the poem—Al Zobeir declares that Muavia was rightfully named Kaliph, and praises his descendant Merwan, then ruling—Al Zobeir concludes his narrative—appearance of the masked Prophet—he declares himself to be a Persian—he curses the reigning Ommyad dynasty and predicts its downfall—he speaks of unrest in Persia, and foretells the coming downfall of the Ommyads, then reigning over all Islam from Damascus—narrative of the disasters which befell the Prophet's family, caused by the schism in Islam upon the accession of Ali and the revolt of Muavia, governor of Syria—the Persian hesitates where to begin his narrative—he selects the episode of the murder of Ali—then tells of the murder of Ali's elder son Hasan—then approaches the tragedy of Kerbela, where Hosein, younger son of Ali, and rightful heir to the Kaliphate, was murdered by order of the Kaliph Yazid, together with sixteen other descendants of the Prophet—Muslim offers to go from Mecca to Kufa in Persia that he may test the temper of the Kufans and find if they will be ready to die for the Imam Hosein—Muslim murdered by Ziad, governor of Kufa—Hosein, unaware of the murder, leaves Mecca for Kufa with his whole family, men, women, and children—he meets with Hûr*



near Kufa he encamps on the Plain of Kerbela near Kufa—Sad, general of the Syrian and Persian army, attempts to make Hosein capitulate without guarantees of any kind—Sad superseded by the accursed Shimar—Hosein's family refuses to leave him in his peril—he fortifies his camp—the King of the Fairies offers to destroy the holy Imam's enemies—Hosein refuses the offer—heroic death of Ali Akbar, Hosein's eldest son—one by one the Family of the Cloak are murdered as they fight heroically—Hosein, the Imam, mounts his steed—his infant son murdered in his arms—the murder of the Holy Imam by the accursed Shimar—the grief of Leila his wife and of his sisters—the conduct of Yazid when the head of Hosein is brought to him—the Persian prophecies of the Last Day—the Patriarchs strive each to save himself alone—Ali pleads in vain for his people to God—even the Prophet fails to obtain pardon for them—Fatima, mother of Hosein and wife of Ali, goes to Kerbela—Hosein rises from the grave—the faithful are saved at his intercession—the Persian concludes by cursing the usurping Kaliphs, Omar, Abou Bekr, and Othman, who wrongfully preceded Ali in the Kaliphate—he then curses Muavia and finally Yazid, who ordered the massacre of Kerbela—he goes on his way unhindered by any of those present—Al Zobeir, being chief minister for the reigning dynasty of Ommyads, makes an apology for them—Al Zobeir concludes, and John Mansour speaks of the blasphemy of the Persian who has stolen from Christianity—the Buddhist suggests that both Persian and Christian have borrowed from others—he advises all to seek Nirvana—he departs—John of Damascus bids farewell to Al Zobeir, and returns to his monastery—the Creeds have met and parted.



“ THUS ends the tale of the prophets twain,  
one born in purple and both to pain,”  
said the saint ; and for a time there fell  
silence on that strange company,  
as when on an island in the sea  
meet birds strayed thither from very far :  
for faithful and Christian, infidel  
were gathered there beneath the palms  
and heard the fountain’s tinkling notes  
which to the speaker music are,  
bearing his thought as on white arms,  
or speaking to him from the throats  
of the cooing doves which come and go,  
and the very marble seems to know.  
Awhile they mused and harkened there  
to the simple sounds which filled the air,  
telling perchance a tale more true  
than any prophet, if we knew  
the meaning of that speech more old  
than any scripture writ in gold.  
They mused awhile and John raised up  
to his parched lips the carven cup  
and quaffed the grape with Zobeir.  
Then from his place the great Vizier  
rose and thus spake Al Zobeir :  
“ I thank you, John Mansour, my friend,  
for this your tale, wherein you blend  
evil with good and false with true  
as ever the Christians wont to do ;  
but none like you, methinks, can lend  
to the false like bloom, nor for the true  
broider so fair the mantle due.  
May Allah’s blessing light on you ;  
long may you live that He may deign  
make all your wisdom not in vain.”  
He spake and silence came again



upon that bright-eyed company.  
Tinkled the fountains, softly cooed  
the doves in pleasant interlude.  
Then sudden in the crowd arose  
a man carved out of ebony.  
His voice resounded as a bell,  
pealed beneath heaven's canopy.  
"Mansour," said he, "much wisdom is  
in this your tale ; and light it throws  
on the Path a little ; but such a tale  
wearing the yellow Buddhist veil  
which changeth much, for me did gleam  
years, years ago, unless I dream,  
in the land whence come those gems which shine  
upon the Christ you call divine.  
And for this tale hath travelled far  
and subtle the Christian doctors are  
to steal the lotus blooms that blow  
in the great stream which long ago  
Gautama bridged that all mankind,  
crossing, Enlightenment should find ;  
steal and their blossoms are a snare  
wound 'mid the thorns in Jesus' hair ;  
'tis fitting that I now reveal  
the truth which those your words conceal.  
No God there is as you declare  
who waits and watches all men do  
and metes his penance, as the snare  
on the poor birds which toward it flew  
in ignorance. No God doth wait  
for man at the opening of death's gate.  
No soul there is which wings its flight  
hellward nor heavenward through the night,  
nor hears in hearing, sees in sight,  
nor dwells a mystery out of sight  
behind our senses, nor passes on

from one to another ; but we burn  
as a lamp burns and is the same  
though thrice extinguished be its flame  
and thrice relit ; for all men yearn  
and all desires pour oil upon  
the flame of life.

Thus all men think and say and do  
followeth each as his shadow true  
till lust be dead and each may merge  
in the great sea withouten surge,  
withouten billows, calm and free  
beyond all thought, ineffably,  
as would be One Thing everywhere  
when nought were left to make compare.  
That is Nirvana and the road  
thither is eightfold as he showed,  
lit by the noble truths fourfold,  
each glittering in priceless gold.  
And the first truth is life on earth,  
which is all sorrow from our birth  
onward through growth and pain till death  
shall take in pain our latest breath.  
And sad it is when man must dwell  
with those whose presence is a hell,  
and to leave those our life made glad  
for us and them is very sad.  
And the second truth is suffering's cause,  
whereof Lord Buddha found the laws.  
Lust in its thousand forms surrounds  
our senses and their action bounds.  
The dream of life is born and thirst  
of pleasure leads us to the worst.  
Baited with pleasure is the net  
and pain the guerdon all men get  
who live for self ; and truth the third  
as the second's echo should be heard.

'Tis sorrow's ceasing. He who knows  
 the birth of self and chokes desire  
 is free from lust, and the raging fire  
 which finds no fuel sinks at last  
 to rest in the empty furnace blast.  
 And the fourth truth is the path which finding  
 man's self must vanish and all the blinding  
 which from this fell illusion flows.  
 And harken all, that all may tread  
 the eightfold path. Right knowledge first  
 holds forth the torch on right resolve,  
 right speech, right acts, and right rehearsed  
 our efforts and our livelihood  
 sought in such manner as is good.  
 Right thought must guide our mind to the light  
 and calm his mind who lives aright.  
 These were the very words he said."  
 He paused, and as he paused upsprung  
 the saint flamboyant : " Man of Ind,  
 Sathan himself speaks with thy tongue,  
 informs thy body, smeareth black  
 with pitch thy skin for Hell's own burning.  
 Thou sayest I stole and stealing sinned  
 taking thy serpent tale of Ind  
 hither by devious routes come gliding,  
 beneath Damascus rose-trees hiding.  
 I sinned indeed as sins the man  
 who plucks his venom from the snake  
 and of its skin a charm doth make,  
 a barred and spotted talisman :  
 such blame scarce asks the heel of spurning.  
 And in the tale, of my God I told  
 whose goings forth are from of old,  
 and of his son the Foreordained  
 coming in excellent glory down,  
 Saviour of all men, as foretold.

To These thy Buddha yields his place,  
thy soulless Buddha who disdained  
all but the few, all gods denied  
seeking within himself for grace.  
An heavenly for an human crown  
made I to shine on Barlaam's brow,  
I opened before Joasaph's eyes  
the real gates of Paradise  
Thou sayest I stole : take answer now :  
Thou liest as thy Buddha lied."  
Here rose Zobeir and : " Tell us more,  
O man of India, of your lore,  
flashed your short speech as do the eyes  
of a woman who hides all again  
and may be nought and have smiled in vain,  
or as a Damasc rosebud she  
burst into blossom suddenly,  
her veils removed of misty rain  
and scent with heaven the sparkling plain.  
Therefore remove those veils and first  
tell of the soul ; relight once more  
that lamp whose thrice-extinguished flame  
leaves my mind darker than before  
your curious speech made flash the same.  
And friend Mansour, you shall endure  
here in my palace the free speech  
of the man of ebony and to each,  
as each to you give hearing due,  
nor into flames of fury burst,  
as when Isaurian Leo roared  
against the worship of your Lord.  
Therefore stand forth, O ebony man,  
speak and be sure you are secure  
here where the Prophet's banner waves,  
to guard in peace the great Koran ;  
for whom Allah wills He wins and saves."

Then stood that man of ebony forth  
 serene, and, "Sir, no fear nor wrath  
 again can ever shake my mind ;  
 but I thank you that your speech is kind  
 and I am fain that you should gain  
 that Path which is never found in vain.  
 Now of the soul and let the globe  
 of the lamp at the first your darkness probe.  
 Now say, Zobeir, were a man to light  
 a lamp which burned through the whole night ;  
 tell me, I pray you, is the flame  
 of the first and the second watch the same ? "  
 Then mused Zobeir and the marble court  
 waited in silence on his thought.  
 Smoothed at the last his brow and he said :  
 "Nay, for the flame of the first is fled."  
 "Then are they twain," said the other. "Nay,"  
 cried Zobeir, "for the oil's the same,  
 the light and the purpose to make bright."  
 "Then are those flames of yesterday  
 yet burning in the lamp the same,  
 filled with the same oil, giving light  
 to the same room the same?" "They might  
 be quenched in the day," the answer came.  
 Said the man of Ind : "Suppose the flame  
 of the first watch quenched in the second, is  
 the flame of the first watch still the same  
 if it burn in the third?" "In a sense the same,  
 in a sense 'tis another flame, I wis."  
 "Then tell me, Zobeir, counts for aught  
 the time since the flame was quenched in the  
 thought :  
 this flame is the same or not the same ? "  
 "Nay," answered Zobeir, "it does not,  
 for whether an age or an instant passed  
 or whether the lamp were quenched or not,

likeness and difference still must last."

"Then," said the Indian: "The flame burning to-day is the same in a way, in a way is other since yesterday, changing each moment, and the same are the flames which with equal power illumine the darkness of the self-same room.

Now, say, if a man think just as you, feel as you feel, act as you do, is that man not the same man as you?"

"Nay, nay, he is other," Zobeir cried.

"Then you would say 'one laws holds sway over all the world save Zobeir.'"

Then the Moslem turned his head aside, and "Nay," said he, "in the earthly sphere one law rules all; yet am I other than that twin self my very brother, though he do as I do, though he feel as I feel, though the mirror asked of each reveal ever the same face." "You speak true," said the ebon man, "but say, at school if a fool get learning, are the fool and the learned one, or are they two?"

"One are they, since the self-same being fool at the first, now comes to seeing."

"So," said the Indian, "you agree that as twin flames, so man must be, and that he whose self and whose every deed are the same as yours is you indeed."

"I must," said Zobeir. "Thus alone are yester-you and to-day's you one," closed the Indian, "not of bone nor of flesh nor of blood is Zobeir's nature, but thoughts and deeds, not form and feature are every man and every creature.

Whither those journey Zobeir hies,

stays where they tarry Zobeir's soul ;  
 thus in a sense you are the same  
 in a sense are other, but who denies  
 this sameness must deny the whole  
 of sameness everywhere—one name  
 cover two Zobeirs, one taking  
 the bowl, his thirst the other slaking."  
 " Well have you argued, man of Ind,  
 and as a strip of riband pinned,  
 my reason fluttering in the wind  
 fain would escape the lofty mast  
 and the arrow points which fix it fast,"  
 cried Zobeir, " but for all you say  
 myself alone do I *wish* to be,  
 now and hereafter, so that I  
 may cry to the self-same man as I :  
 ' Know fellow, know, though you think like me,  
 live as I live, pray as I pray,  
 own what I own, are sad or glad  
 just when I am : *you are not I !* '"  
 " Therefore you cleave to self, and cleaving  
 will be ever dying and ever grieving,"  
 said the Indian ; " which of all these is *you*,  
 is the very self you cleave unto ?  
 the babe you were once, the youth, or the man  
 facing me here ? " But the Zephyr's sigh  
 in the leaves came only for reply  
 and the drops of the fountain laughed as they ran.  
 Then again the Indian : " *All* your deeds  
 in the lives outlived are your self, your soul ;  
 whether wheat or tares, you sowed the seeds,  
 whither these are blown is Zobeir's goal,  
 nor if in a cleft of the hills you hide,  
 nor under the swell of the ocean's tide,  
 can you escape the fruit which growing  
 is you yourself, both the sowed and the sowing.



' Ill deeds are the enemies that wait  
to accuse you at the dreadful gate,'  
as told Mansour ; good deeds the friend  
whom also you must meet at the end  
of each life lived ; good deeds will be true,  
paying your debts, but good deeds are you  
who save yourself.

But for ' God's wrath and the judgment seat,'  
they are less than the hidden monster's bellow  
made by a child to fright his fellow,  
less than the dancing leaves which cheat,  
red yellow and dead in the wind-swept street."

" A creed for stocks and stones is this :  
no God and a soul which is not and is :"  
cried out St John. But Zobeir : " Stay,  
dear friend, your blame, you have said your say ;  
now let the man of Ind disclose  
the spring whence all his knowledge flows.

And friend of India come I pray,  
stand you by me that I may be  
more near to the dark mystery  
which in your face and your speech doth dwell,  
and of Gautama hear you tell."

Thereon that ebony man arose  
and alone as the rhinoceros goes,  
without dismay he thrud his way  
up the white court, past curious faces,  
past the cooing doves and the sunny spaces,  
until 'neath Zobeir's giant palm  
he stood erect and suave and calm.

" Of Gautama you bid me speak,"  
said he, " so best it is I seek  
our pearls of orient in the shell  
of the Christian oyster which hideth them,  
picked from the Buddha's diadem.  
And first of the prophet and prince I tell.



Gautama was the prince to whom  
 came the Buddha when he felt the gloom  
 of the palace-prison of Abenner ;  
 'twas the Buddha who at the tennis play  
 did strike the whirling ball on its way,  
*he* weaned Gautama's eyes from the eyes  
 of maiden's longing and despair,  
 placed he to blot their image there.  
 Gautama mounted upon his steed,  
 but the Buddha his first free course did lead  
 to the door of the blind where the leper lies  
 at his feet who is made of miseries !  
 Yea, 'twas the Buddha Barlaam brought  
 to Joasaph that precious stone,  
 'fit for great prince's hand alone.'  
 'Twas Buddha's self Prince Joasaph taught,  
 discoursed of truth, and bade him tread  
 that path which alone to 'Heaven' led.  
 Now Buddha and Gautama are one  
 as a clear and a clouded sun are the sun,  
 and Barlaam and Joasaph are one,  
 as the moon in water is the moon,  
 and these from those their lustre borrow  
 as a thief steals gold which melts to sorrow.  
 Now of Gautama ye shall know  
 that he was born beyond the flow  
 of the Indian seas in a middle land,  
 as tells Mansour, and his father planned  
 an equal long felicity  
 for his son, the King that was to be  
 (though in no prison hid was he  
 to shield him from the ills of life).  
 But when of age he took to wife  
 fair Yashodore who filled for him  
 the cup of love and of life to the brim.  
 But never did his footsteps stray

along that bowered alley's way  
where laughing maidens wait for the heart  
and each will tear her own small part  
till naught remain of the battle gay  
save blood on the craving lips and sighs  
where the bird of youth all murdered lies,  
and the best with the worst together dies.  
He lovèd her right royally,  
he lovèd her right tenderly ;  
they built together towers of bliss,  
till wisdom made an end of this.  
And ever from the lightfoot game  
Gautama turned himself to dream  
on life and life's infirmities ;  
until men cried : ' What prince is here ?  
a prince who cannot wield the spear,  
nor cause the feathered arrow speed  
home to the mark across the mead ?'  
Therefore upon a certain day  
descended to their meadow play  
Gautama's self : the shaft obeyed  
his lightest touch and split a hair  
hung at a mile's length and he layed  
one after one each trophy meet  
before the King his father's feet,  
the King his father sitting where  
incense of triumph filled the air.  
But vain the King's fond hope that he  
thus prince of games would ever be  
prince marksman of a quiet land.  
Gautama turned him from the world,  
and long remained in thought enfurled.  
Then, as in Mansour's tale doth stand,  
came to him visions, he beheld  
a dying man, a man of eld,  
a corpse decaying and a monk

of mien austere : these visions sunk  
deep in his mind and were the seed  
whereof came fruit of word and deed.  
Alone he set him out to climb  
the terraced heights of truth sublime,  
alone he wrestled, and alone  
the mighty victory he won.  
But this not yet, for he must tear  
forth from his bleeding heart those ties  
which as a chain our families  
wind round our lives, and wrestling there  
upon the slopes a messenger  
came from the King and cried : ' Return  
O prince, for a son to you is born  
and the whole realm with joy doth burn,  
saith the King, and Princess Yashodore  
made happy mother yester-morn  
doth crave for the Prince at her side once more.'  
From ocean depths of thought profound  
swam up Gautama at the sound  
of the courtier's voice and thus he spake :  
' This is a new bond hard to break.'  
Then toward the town the twain went down  
and drawing near a maiden sung  
sweetest of all sweet songs among  
the songs of triumph : ' Happy the father,  
happy the wife, happy the mother  
of such a son and husband ; ' when  
he heard the song a pearlèd chain  
from his neck unclaspèd Gautama  
and for her song bade give to her.  
And the damsel when the necklace shone,  
once his, now hers, began to dream :  
' This chain's for symbol I have won  
Gautama's heart,' and many a scheme  
to hold the treasured heart made she—

as well dream she had won the sea.  
For at midnight on the self-same day,  
softly Gautama made his way  
to that still room where peacefully  
slept Yashodora and her hand  
upon Rahula's head was laid,  
his babe and hers ; white lilies made  
a silver circle round the bed ;  
dim lamps in silver sconces burned.  
A moment did Gautama stand  
irresolute, for much he yearned  
once in his arms to hold his son ;  
but, for he feared lest he should waken  
the sleeping mother, having taken  
such leave as fondest eyes can look,  
the palace and the past forsook.  
Thus was the first great victory won  
—the Great Renunciation.  
Then mounting Kanthaka he rode  
league upon league of night-bound road  
with Chandaka the charioteer  
until where blue Anoma flowed,  
he paused, dismounted, did him off  
his robes of sparkling princely gear  
and these with Kanthaka bestowed  
on Chandaka that he should bring  
a world forsaken to the King.  
A beggar passed in rags whereof  
one is for Gautama, and now  
alone he seeks the neighbouring town.  
Hard by upon the mountain's brow  
which on the moving streets looked down  
dwelt hermits, and to one of these  
came Gautama that he might know  
the cure of love and life and woe.  
Long dwelt he there and knew not ease.

For food a single sesame seed  
must serve the long day's direst need ;  
his body wavering as a reed  
shook as he went deep merged in thought.  
Thus living death for life he got.  
And now a little company  
followed his footsteps marvelling  
at such an awful sanctity.  
Thus peace he sought but found it not.  
Alone one day as slowly, slowly  
upon the earth he moved wholly  
merged in thinking, fell away  
his limbs and on the earth he lay.  
Then sweet beyond the power of telling  
music he heard from very far,  
music as of a mandora  
touched by a god and drawing near,  
behold it sounded in his ear.  
Then suddenly the music ended  
and Indra from his heaven descended,  
gazed on Gautama's eyes with eyes  
infinite, wonderful, and wise.  
No word he spake, but with his finger  
he pointed where the sweet sounds linger  
around the three-stringed mandora  
touched by his hand in heaven afar.  
And then he made as though again  
he willed to wake the self-same strain.  
But first he touched the topmost string—  
shivered the air with crying shrill,  
and next he touched the third, loose string—  
flat fell the sound for want of wing—  
but when the middle string touched he  
came back the same sweet melody  
as did the earth and the heaven fill  
when Indra came to Gautama.

Thus as the antique legends say  
Gautama found the middle way  
and the path of abstinence forsook,  
for ever after he partook  
of meat and of drink in such degree  
as asked a wise œconomy  
of the body's forces. But the crowd  
that had followed him now cried aloud :  
' Here is no Master,' and departed—  
for all agreed that the mind had need  
of the body prostrate for its steed.  
They left Gautama heavy-hearted.  
But he rose high above his grief  
and in himself he found relief.  
Moving with steadier step he sought  
the shadow of the bodhi tree;  
more holy than all trees that be,  
and plunged refreshed again in thought.  
Then Mara, prince of evil, came  
and called Gautama by his name :  
' Lord of the Five Desires am I,  
great prince,' he cried, ' and if you will  
the empire of the earth and sky  
in an instant at your feet shall lie.'  
He spake, but Gautama was still  
beneath the shadow of the tree.  
Then all the air with dæmons fell  
filled Mara as the legends tell,  
quaked the fond earth as a new-made bride  
whose spouse is severed from her side,  
shook as the trailing vine's festoon  
in the fury of the wild monsoon.  
But still beneath the bodhi tree  
unmoved he sat, and presently  
calm came the storm, the dæmons fled  
with Mara vanquished at their head :

the winds of hell blew sweet perfume,  
the bolts of hell grew lotus bloom.  
And here in the storm without is seen  
figured the storm which raged within  
Gautama's heart beneath the tree :  
home, wealth, and power he had left to gain  
peace, and for guerdon gat he pain ;  
home, wealth, and power he could regain,  
returning to the world again,  
but peace no more.

Thus raged the storm without, within,  
thus Mara strove the prince to win,  
but he beneath the bodhi tree  
sat with mind fixed immovably.

Won was the fight, the clouds of sorrow,  
as a black to-day flies a radiant morrow,  
fled now forever and the sun  
soared to the zenith Buddha won.

This was the Great Enlightenment.

*' Long have I wandered long,' he sang,  
' bound by the chains through births and pains  
innumerable and felt the fang  
of wild desire, of self on fire.*

*Found, it is found the cause,' he sang,  
' of self on fire, of wild desire.*

*N<sup>o</sup> house O architect for me  
again can ever builded be ;  
shattered are thy rafters, scattered  
are thy roof timbers utterly,  
no house thou buildest more for me.  
Mine is Nirvana, mine, it lies  
within my reach, before mine eyes ;  
now, if I will it, now I may  
pass now eternally away  
out of existence, leave no trace  
of me in this or in any place.*

*But love I bear thee, love, and stay,  
Humanity, for thy dear sake  
with mine own hands the bridge to make,  
which if thou cross thou too shalt gain  
freedom from birth and death and pain.'*

The world was silent as he sang.  
And this is the meaning of the song.  
Pondering beneath the bodhi tree  
on birth and death, on right and wrong,  
there passed before his inward eye  
all the ills of the world, the misery  
which for themselves men make to be,  
craving for pleasure, and when they die  
they find not peace, but aye returning  
in the flames of self are ever burning.  
Ignorance only, now he knew  
for the cause whence all these sorrows grew  
and from his mind all suffering fell  
as water-drop from lotus bell.  
Perfect enlightenment was his ;  
his was it, if he willed, to cross  
in the small boat as Buddhas olden  
before him as the legends tell  
alone had crossed to perfect bliss,  
nor suffered ought of shame nor loss.  
Yet he remained to build the golden  
Great Bridge, by the Four Truths upholden  
whereby you, I, and all may cross  
the stream of life : no gain had he,  
save that he loved humanity.  
And, Sirs, our love he hath for this,  
and when beneath the bodhi tree  
won now was the great victory,  
the Buddha rose, the Buddha bent  
his steps toward the great city,  
Benares hight, and as he went



there met him those who had forsaken  
their master when the food was taken.  
'Gautama, tell us,' questioned they,  
'wherefore thy form and countenance  
are come so beautiful, what ray  
of things divine, what utterance  
of god or dæmon maketh bright  
thy being with effulgent light?'  
Then turned the Buddha grandly round  
as only Buddhas turn and spake :  
'Gautama am I now no more,  
but Buddha only, to expound  
the truth, to roll the wheel of the law  
of righteousness for all men's sake  
upon the earth awhile I stay.  
Come now where browse the forest deer,  
come all the world the truth to hear.'  
Then toward the park he made his way  
followed by multitudes, and even  
the gods descended from high heaven,  
leaving it void. The evening  
shone as a maiden shines whose neck  
innumerable stars bedeck,  
the darkling clouds her braided hair,  
her flowing locks the depths of air,  
her eyes the lotus opening  
at moon-rise and her voice as bees  
innumerable in summer trees.  
The Buddha spake, and every word  
sounded to each as his own speech—  
to man, to god, to beast and bird.  
'In the beginning is desire  
blind and therefrom all being springs ;  
the senses and the mind aspire  
to reach and touch external things ;  
the thirst of self is born and cleaving

brings with it growth of self continued  
in births eternally renewed.

This is the cause of suffering.

No pain there is, no vice, no sin,  
save what has crept with selfhood in.

Ignorance only is the root  
whence grows for all this bitter fruit.

Slay ignorance and you have slain  
the cause of birth and death and pain.'

And thus the jewelled windows wide  
opened the Buddha to the world  
and the Four Noble Truths unfurled  
whereto the Eightfold Path is guide."

Here stayed the Indian, but Zobeir  
cried, "Speak, I pray, and tell me more  
of the Lord Buddha and his law

of righteousness ; pray tell me where  
he dwelt and taught, and if in life

his ancient sire, his son and wife  
again he saw, and if he died

as died *our* Prophet Mohammad,  
or rapt from earth to heavenly bliss  
no taste of the pains of death he had?"

Then smiled and answered India this :

"Zobeir, I fear 'tis all in vain  
that I have striven to make plain  
the noble Truths ; since he was mortal  
the Buddha passed by death's wide portal,  
but to Nirvana, ne'er again  
to be doomed to birth and death and pain."

"Where is Nirvana?" asked Zobeir.

"Where dwells the wind?" "Not anywhere,  
yet is it here and everywhere,"

made answer Islam. "Then just there  
is the place Nirvana, O Zobeir,"

answered the Indian ; "but to tell

of what to the Buddha's kin befell  
asks but a word ; when the world had heard  
the truth beneath Benares' trees,  
the Buddha preached in many a town,  
robed in his yellow beggar's gown,  
and in his hand the bowl of wood  
which held each day such sort of food  
as chance and charity might please.  
And now a mighty multitude  
had joined the holy Brotherhood.  
Far spread his fame until it came  
unto his aged father's ears,  
who, for he felt that now was near  
the end of life, exceedingly  
cravèd once more his son to see.  
Therefore these words he sent : ' O son  
as longs the lily for the sun,  
so do I long to see thy face.'  
Then came the Buddha to the place  
where was his father, who mounted down  
from his chariot to greet his son  
—his son no more, the Holy One.  
Then gazing on him, thus he spake :  
' Return, return, my son to me.'  
No answer did the Buddha make,  
but looked upon him lovingly.  
Then again the father : ' Thine to take  
is all my kingdom, but to thee  
all were as ashes, dear my son.'  
And the Buddha answered : ' Full of grief  
and love thy heart, O King, I know ;  
but let the ties of love and of woe  
which bind thee to thy son embrace  
all fellow-beings in his place  
and thou shalt find a sure relief,  
coming to know a greater one

than ever was thine only son,—  
 the Buddha : and shalt find release  
 entering Nirvana's perfect peace.'  
 ' Wonderful is the change I feel,'  
 answered the King, ' thy words reveal  
 the outlines of omniscience ;  
 my sorrow flies and I rejoice  
 since thou hast made this mighty choice,  
 renouncing all ;' and the King went thence  
 to his palace and the Holy One  
 unto the grove hard by the town.  
 Arose the Buddha and the Sun  
 the morrow on the earth together,  
 and to the town the Holy One  
 went bowl in hand his food to gather,  
 begging from house to house ; men came  
 to tell the King and he had shame  
 (not yet the path was his) to know  
 that his son a royal beggar went  
 craving his daily nourishment  
 within the walls of his own city,  
 where he the King could all bestow.  
 Therefore in haste he went him down  
 to seek the beggar in the town ;  
 and, ' Wherefore thus dost thou bring shame  
 on me and on our ancient name ?  
 Forgettest thou thine ancestry ?  
 Is thy bowl empty ? Fill thy bowl  
 from out our royal granary.'  
 Then the Buddha : ' Thou and thine may claim  
 if so you will a glittering name,  
 but *my* descent from Buddhas olden  
 who begged as I, O King, is holden.'  
 The King was silent and again  
 spake the Buddha : ' Custom wills, O King,  
 that if a son a treasure gain,

the brightest jewel he shall bring  
to his father for an offering.  
Therefore receive of thy son's love  
this jewel of his treasure-trove :  
Arise, arise, and dream no more,  
arise and harken to the law ;  
follow the path of righteousness  
which leadeth to eternal bliss.'   
To the palace then they went together  
and welcomed was the Buddha there  
by all his kin, save only one—  
the fair, the widowed Yashodora—  
who in her chamber woe-gone  
counted her days of wifehood o'er.  
And ' Surely *he* will come to me  
if ever once he loved me true ;  
seven years have flown since that still eve  
when as we slept he gazed on you  
and upon me, Rahula mine,  
for the last time and did depart,  
and nothing took of mine or thine,  
save only what was his—my heart.  
And were it mine to take or give  
again to him, again I'd give.  
Ah ! why so heavy on mine eyes  
was laid the hand of sleep that night ?  
I'd liefer ne'er have seen the skies  
again than lose that blessed sight.  
And when they told me now were shorn  
those rippling locks from off thy head  
and garbed in ancient rags and torn  
that thou didst beg thy daily bread :  
then fell my wealth of curl so dear,  
my Lord, to thee upon a time,  
fell with the closing of the shear  
which made thee monk, and garments dim

and food from bowl of wood alone  
are all my use since thou art gone.  
And other Princes came and laid  
themselves and kingdoms me before,  
came and departed, for I said :  
the Lord yet lives of Yashodore.’  
She spake and wandered to and fro  
within her chamber and her ear  
catches the winds as they come and go  
in the trees without, and far or near  
no sound of the palace but strikes home  
to her anxious heart : ‘Will he come, will he come ?’  
And now ’tis a sentinel’s passing tread  
sounds the alarm of joy and of dread  
in her heaving bosom, but quick despair  
leaps back to claim his empire there  
when she knows her error, and oft again  
comes pain comes hope, comes hope comes pain  
with the rustling of a leaf on the wall,  
with the least sound of things most small.  
But now a sound divine she hears  
and now come joy and hopes and fears  
riding in triumph over her mind.  
She hears his step and speech refined  
of every evil that it shone  
as new-come angels ere they don  
the robes of heaven and yet wear  
the weed of earth made glorious there.  
And, ‘Suffer her to come to me’  
(thus to his followers he spake  
as they drew near her chamber door),  
‘for she hath grieved exceedingly,  
and when I come her heart will break  
unless she may her grief outpour.’  
He entered in and Yashodore  
held by his feet and wept full sore.

But when the floodgates opened wide  
 had poured their crystal wealth of tear,  
 her soul swam up upon the tide,  
 and now she gazed into his face,  
 and since she saw no longer there  
 aught of the husband, but the Lord,  
 the Buddha by all worlds adored,  
 rising she went a little space,  
 reverently harkening to his voice :  
 ' Above all women now rejoice,  
 for casting back my gaze I see  
 thee in births past most excellent  
 in love and faith and charity,  
 in gentleness and purity,  
 and when the Bodisât aspired  
 to reach supreme enlightenment,  
 then holy Yashodore desired  
 to be his wife. Lo ! she hath done  
 a splendid doing, she hath won  
 the passage of eternal joy.'  
 Thus spake the Buddha, and the boy  
 Rahula to his mother came.  
 ' There stands thy father, dear,' she said ;  
 ' go thou to him and make thy claim,  
 my son, for thine inheritance.'  
 ' Mother, methought that long was dead  
 the prince my father,' answered he,  
 but going straightway, stood below :  
 ' Father, behold a radiance  
 thy very shadow seems to throw ;  
 thy son am I, and I would fain  
 that upon me thou shouldst bestow  
 this shining for an heritage.'  
 Then said the Buddha : ' Thou must gain  
 thyself this shining, nor from me  
 canst thou inherit seignorage,

nor piles of yellow conquering gold ;  
but son, if thou art strong to hold  
a mightier gift, 'tis thine to take  
the glittering treasure of the mind,  
the Noble Truths by which to find  
the Eightfold Path.' And the boy replied :  
'Sire, I will follow if thou wilt guide.'

And the old King did grieve full sore  
to see his son his son no more  
and with his grandchild pass together  
out of the world of Kings for ever,  
and through their living fingers must  
ages of empire fall in dust.

Yet was this needful, nor again  
did the Buddha tread that broad domain  
which as a weighty burden he  
threw off for immortality ;<sup>1</sup>  
but teaching, preaching, doing, being,  
he moved on India, nowhere staying  
more than to ope the eye of seeing ;  
and all he said with all he did  
chimed as the voice accompanied  
by the ineffable sweet playing  
of music on the magic reed,  
save that his golden speech and deed  
ask not frail echo's charioting  
adown the dusty world's highways,  
ask no vain word of blame or praise :  
but are salvation.

Hark ! now ye hear his voice resound.  
Lo ! here he points the path he found.  
For you to follow." Then Zobeir,  
equal to equal rose, and, "Sir,"  
he said, "your Buddha lord and king

<sup>1</sup> That is Nirvana, which is not the extinction of being but the extinction of all desire.



methinks did do but a foolish thing  
leaving his bright and fruitful lands  
to herd with beggars ; let the great  
nourish the poor with bounteous hands,  
but let them, mindful of their state,  
dwell in their place, nor cast away  
on the winds of chance their power and sway.”  
Answered the Indian : “ Sir, the law  
of righteousness forbids the pride  
of power and wealth and family,  
for gazing back the Buddha saw  
great Brahmans begging, beggars ride  
in gold and purple panoply  
according to the deeds of each,  
upward or downward passing flowing  
on the Samskaras till they reach  
that knowledge which alone is knowing  
and over their own selves prevail,  
rend with their own hands Maya’s veil.  
Upward or down they pass and he,  
the Buddha, in the lives gone by  
dwells as its spirit in a tree  
and is the rustling of its leaves,  
throws shadow where the sun on high  
burns on the plain the passer-by.  
And upward mounting he achieves  
the sum of all existences,  
roams as a fish in the deep seas,  
as jackal howls the passing nights,  
as crow, as woodpecker delights  
in deeds of winged piety,  
flits as a snipe through rice-sown fields,  
glides as a serpent, and the bites  
of other serpents presently  
as the snake-charmer healeth he.  
He belloweth grandly as the bull,  
and to his strength the waggon yields

which ere he came an hundred yoke  
from the deep ruts had failed to pull  
As eagle dwells he in high heaven,  
as lion prowls the woods at even,  
dying an-hungered willingly.  
As deer he waits upon the stroke  
of the starved woodman, as the squirrel  
when the storm carries out to sea  
his bright-eyed furry family  
(thus do our ancient legends tell)  
he toils to dry it with his tail,  
and Sekra pitying saith to him :  
' O squirrel toiling at the brim  
of ocean's cup without avail,  
now cease, for though as many men  
as grains of sand upon this shore  
strove to make less the ocean's store  
of salt green drops a million years,  
their toil as yours would be as vain  
and ocean's cup nor less nor more,  
save for the tribute of their tears.'  
' O Sekra, were they men as you,'  
answered the squirrel, ' that were true  
which now you say ;' thereat anew  
his tail he dips into the sea.  
And Sekra stretching forth his hand  
lifts the young squirrels safe to land,  
amazed at such constancy.  
As elephant upon his back  
he bears the monarch, as its guide  
he walks the elephant beside,  
as king upon its back doth ride  
in many births, as monk doth lack  
by his own will the joys of life.  
But never was he maid nor wife,  
and always male, lest he should know  
those sins which work frail women's woe.'

“ Ah ! There indeed was the Buddha wise,”  
cried Zobeir, “ hid from all men’s sight,  
let soulless woman’s form delight  
her lord alone.” “ Not so, not so,  
taught the Buddha, and that ye may know  
the fair equality for all,  
for male and female, great and small,  
which in the Buddha’s doctrine lies,  
hark to the tale of the courtesan,  
fair Ambapali, how she bade  
the Buddha to her glittering board  
and the Likkhavi chiefs outran  
upon the noble eightfold path,  
for pearls of truth the story hath.  
It happed upon a day the Lord  
coming to Vaishali made glad  
the heart of Ambapali going  
to seek the shadow of her grove.  
Wherefore in simple garments clad,  
her jewel’s fire extinguishèd,  
her long hair coiled upon her head,  
she mounted on her chariot knowing  
how great the honour done her, going  
to thank the Lord as it behove  
And drawing near, she lit her down  
and sought on foot the Holy One,  
modestly seeking out a place  
whence she might look upon his face,  
yet not so far as that he could  
hold speech with her if so he would.  
And the Buddha turned to those by him :  
‘ Behold,’ he said, ‘ this woman slim ;  
narrow the circle of her arms,  
yet have they clasped an empire round,  
for mighty kings before her charms  
have fallen conquered to the ground,

have sold to gaze into her eyes  
 an empire for a paradise.  
 All this her doing, yet, most rare  
 of women made so deadly fair,  
 behold she is become most wise,  
 and now is worthy to receive  
 the truth complete which Buddhas give.'  
 And as he spake, her face grew bright,  
 her body quivered for delight.  
 She rose and bowing low, she said :  
 ' Will the Blessed Buddha deign to take  
 with me to-morrow eve his food ?  
 the Buddha and the brotherhood ?'  
 No answer did the Buddha make,  
 giving by silence his consent.  
 Fulfilled with joy, she rose and went  
 to her chariot, faring on her way,  
 and met the Likkhavi's array,  
 chariots and steeds caparisoned  
 in cloth of azure clasped with gold.  
 And the Likkhavi cried : ' Behold  
 Ambapali unparagoned  
 in all the world ; but we may not stay  
 in dalliance with thee on our way  
 to greet the Buddha and invite  
 his presence on the morrow's night  
 to feast with us.' ' My Lords,' she said,  
 to-morrow eve at set of the sun  
 he sups with me, the Holy One.'  
 ' O Ambapali,' answered  
 the Likkhavi, ' if thou wilt yield  
 to us this honour, we will give  
 an hundred golden chariots filled  
 with rarest gems of land and sea.'  
 ' My Lords,' said she, ' I would not leave  
 to you this honour for the fee

of all the realm of Vaishali.'  
 Then the Likkhavi went their way,  
 coming to Ambapali's grove  
 to seek the Buddha, and they drove  
 in splendour as the full midday.  
 And the Buddha to the brethren said :  
 ' If any here have ne'er beheld  
 the immortal gods, let him now give heed  
 to the Likkhavi charioted  
 like Indra's self when he upheld  
 the world uplifted on his steed.'  
 And the Likkhavi mounted down  
 and came to the place of the Blessed One,  
 and sitting by his side they heard  
 respectfully the holy word.  
 Then they arose and bowing low :  
 ' May the Blessed One,' they said, ' bestow  
 an honour on the Likkhavi ;  
 may he deign to take to-morrow eve  
 his meal in the palace, ere he leave  
 this kingdom of our Vaishali.'  
 ' To-morrow eve at set of the sun,  
 O Likkhavi,' said the Holy One,  
 ' my meal I take with the courtezan,  
 with Ambapali.' Then before  
 the Buddha bowed they down once more  
 and on their chariots mounting ran  
 their course again to Vaishali.  
 But when to the palace home they came  
 they lifted up their hands and : ' Shame,'  
 they cried, ' is upon us, thus to be  
 defeated by the lissom girl,  
 by her whose head of wanton curl,  
 whose beauty as the lotus bloom,  
 marked her we thought for our plaything.  
 But lo ! she buildeth now the tomb

of all our pleasure, taketh wing,  
before us on the eightfold path ;  
victoriously now she hath  
vied with her lords the Likkhavi.'  
Thus mourned those mighty princes shorn  
of the fair flower which did adorn  
their dreams of pleasure, thus outdone  
by a girl in the eyes of the Holy One.  
But the morrow as the hour drew near  
made ready the courtesan such cheer  
as pleased the Buddha, cakes and rice,  
honey and fruits and rarest ice,  
and goblets of the cool well water,  
as the wisdom of the Buddha taught her.  
And through the night a messenger  
sped like a white moth flying straight :  
and to the grove he came and said,  
' O Blessed One, the meal doth wait  
thy glorious coming.' And the Lord  
girt up his yellow robe and led  
the brethren to the dwelling-place  
of Ambapali and they sat  
in order at her glittering board.  
And Ambapali's form and face  
shone forth with joy unspeakable.  
Herself she served them and they ate.  
When the meal was ended drawing nigh  
to the Buddha, on the golden mat  
where were his holy feet she sank.  
And, ' O Blessed One,' she said, ' I thank  
thee for the honour done to me,  
yet crave another all as great :  
this house of mine to dedicate  
to thee and thy fraternity.'  
The Buddha took that house of sin  
come holy by his entering in,

and placing her himself beside,  
he roused, instructed, edified  
the courtezan who though she grew  
in the mud of the lake as the lotus do,  
yet bare a blossom fairer far  
than ever lotus showed to star.  
Now this is the tale of the courtezan  
and in its telling you may see  
the nothingness of great degree,  
the woman swifter than the man  
upon the path that leads to bliss,  
though feebler far her mind than his,  
though clinging robes and trailing hair  
she must carry in the race with her.  
But of the forty years and more  
wherein the Buddha taught the law  
of righteousness, though I fain would tell,  
ere I to Islam say farewell,  
yet must I hence upon my way  
leaving ye here but blossoms stray  
out of their season flowering  
as the blossom of the shala tree  
when the Lord Buddha ceased to be."  
"Ah! tell us how the Buddha died,  
tell of the brethren sorrowing,"  
with voice expectant Zobeir cried.  
Then India smiled, and "Many a day  
would I fain discourse of the eightfold way,  
and of the followers that knew  
his voice and face, the glittering few,  
of Kudatanta, Vishaka,  
of rich Anathapindika,  
of Jivaka who healed his wound,  
of Shariputra, Bimbisara  
the warlike King of Magadha,  
of Anuruddha who did expound

those mysteries the most profound  
—Dhyana and Abhinnya—  
of Devadatta madly daring  
to found an order for the sharing  
of the Lord's truth who led astray  
full many from the eightfold way,  
and for his sin is doomed to pay  
with myriad lives of suffering—  
of these and others would I sing.  
Sing of the last days long foretold,  
of Chunda and the meal of boar,  
of Ananda and the robe he wore,  
like to the Lord's of burnished gold,  
the gifts of Pusshaka, and though  
the Buddha's robe of gold all through  
shone ere he donned it, wondrous bright,  
through it his body like a flame  
burned and the robe all dull became  
(twice thus in the Buddha's life, on the night  
when he had reached supremest sight  
beneath the bodhi tree and the last  
when utterly away he passed  
as ever Buddhas shine shone he,  
bright beyond speech exceedingly),  
sing of the Malla's grove and how  
between the sister shala trees  
Ananda spread the couch and now  
facing the north, his mind at ease,  
the Buddha rests for the last time  
in this or in any earth or heaven.  
Fain would I count the blossoms given  
out of their season by the boughs,  
for joy and sorrow showering  
white petals on the couch sublime ;  
fain catch the downward wafted vows  
of the gods in heaven glorying



that now one greater far than they  
 Buddha Gautama passeth away  
 as pass the Buddhas from of old,  
 sing of the blessed words he told  
 unto Ananda grieving sore  
 that now the lamp he lit no more  
 would shine upon the world : ' Before,  
 Ananda, in the years bygone  
 have I instructed you that none  
 of things most near, of things most dear  
 can by their nature ere endure.  
 This truth I found, of this be sure :  
 The dream of self is the dream of sorrow  
 to be dissolvèd on the morrow.  
 Lo ! having given the excellent law  
 for man's salvation and fulfilled  
 those duties to mankind I willed,  
 I am resolved to seek that rest  
 which above all good things is best.  
 Ananda, long you have been near to me,  
 Ananda, long you have been dear to me,  
 beyond all measure ; you have done  
 a noble doing and if you  
 to the eightfold path remain but true,  
 by storm and shine, by moon and sun,  
 full soon from self and sense and pain  
 you too shall be freed, you too shall gain  
 the bliss that waits me, you shall rend  
 the veil of Maya hanging still  
 before those tender eyes that fill  
 even now with tears to lose your friend,  
 albeit he passeth by the gate  
 barred upon birth and death and fate.'  
 Ananda stemmed the tide of tears  
 welling within him, and he said :  
 ' But who shall guide when you are sped ? '

And the Buddha answered thus his fears :  
 ' Nor last nor first of the Buddhas I  
 to dwell on the earth ; I came to teach  
 the law of righteousness to each.  
 Siddhartha Gautama will die  
 but the Buddha liveth eternally,  
 for he is the truth and cannot die.  
 Five hundred years the truth will grow,  
 full twenty generations know  
 the eightfold path ere the clouds can spread  
 their mists before the light I shed.  
 Then in the stream of years will rise  
 another Buddha to reveal  
 the truth which error's mists conceal ;  
 and the truth he teacheth is the same  
 as the truth I taught.' Then Ananda said :  
 ' How shall men know him otherwise ? '  
 and the Buddha answered him : ' His name  
 Maitreya, the Buddha who is kind,'  
 will be the light whereby to find  
 this Buddha of the years to come.  
 Then the Mallas and their families  
 went to the grove where the Buddha came,  
 hoping to gain such meed of bliss  
 as falleth to the lot of some  
 who have been in the sight of the Holy One.  
 From his couch he spake : ' Ye have not done  
 enough in coming : to obey  
 the excellent law is the only way  
 leading from sorrow, vain it is  
 to gaze on the Buddha with a mind  
 which to the truth he taught is blind.  
 As the sick man who never saw  
 the leech may yet from medicine draw  
 full healing of his maladies ;  
 so he who dwelleth very far

from the Holy One, yet treads the path  
 the Buddha for companion hath."  
 Low bowed the Mallas and went thence,  
 filled with an infinite reverence.  
 And to Ananda spake the Lord :  
 ' Lo ! ended is the Master's word.  
 Firm fixed the rules of the Order are ;  
 let the truth and the great rules ever stand  
 untouched by thine or by any hand,  
 being eternal, but in time  
 if the lesser rules ring out of chime  
 with the doing of a different day,  
 let them be altered, swept away,  
 as to the Order seemeth good.'  
 Then crowding round the brethren stood,  
 heartrung to hear the last words spoken.  
 And the Lord spake for the last time :  
 ' Lo ! I alone of men have broken  
 the shell of the egg of ignorance.  
 Lo ! brethren, I, the most sublime,  
 the eldest of the sons of men,  
 my work completed, journey hence  
 into Nirvana, ne'er again  
 to taste of birth or death or pain.  
 Truth is eternal, but decay  
 informeth all that is mixed of clay.  
 Toil, therefore, toil with diligence  
 to win salvation.'  
 No more he spake and did advance  
 into the first deep stage of trance,  
 and thence through all until the last.  
 Then only in his mind remained  
 the sense of space without an end ;  
 which having ceased, the thought of thought  
 only within his ken was brought.  
 This being ended, then he passed

into that state where triumphs nought.  
 Then between sleep and waking he  
 floated awhile uncertainly.  
 Then passed sensation and idea  
 wholly away and Ananda cried,  
 weeping, 'The Lord of the World hath died.'  
 'Nay, brother, but his end is near,'  
 said Anuruddha, 'he will trace  
 full circle back to the same place,  
 ere he may vanish utterly.'  
 Even as he spake came back again  
 idea, sensation to the brain,  
 and between sleep and waking he  
 floated again uncertainly ;  
 then by those states he passed where nought  
 reigneth supreme, where the thought of thought,  
 where the thought of space alone may dwell,  
 and again in the fourfold trances fell.  
 And as from the fourth deep trance he passed  
 the Holy Buddha breathed his last.  
 Then the heart of the mighty earth was riven,  
 thunders pealed forth from highest heaven,  
 and of the brethren, those yet bound  
 in the chains of the passions fell to the ground  
 headlong, and in their anguish cried :  
 'Too soon hath the Blessed Buddha died !  
 too soon, too soon, hath the Holy One  
 passed from existence ; now the Light  
 of the world is quenched in trackless Night.'  
 'Enough ! enough ! weep not, I say ;  
 'tis true that the Lord hath passed away,  
 the work he willed to do being done,  
 since he, like all that is born to be,  
 by the law of being must decay ;  
 therefore be calm, to yourselves be true ;  
 grip fast the truth he taught to you.'

Stemmed Anuruddha thus their grief  
and with Ananda found relief  
as the vigils of the night sped by  
in sad and happy memory.  
But with the first of the morning's red  
which over the face of the heavens sped  
came the Mallas to the shala grove  
to raise the pyre as it behove.  
And a mighty company they bore  
garlands and perfumes and a store  
of glittering robes, and music sweet  
danced in the air as danced their feet  
rhythmically, reverently,  
around the perfume-laden pyre,  
and now the blue and the yellow fire  
soars up to heaven, now they sing  
loud songs of joy and of triumphing  
as the empty palace built of clay,  
its lord departed passeth away.  
For they burned him as a King of Kings.  
And as he burned the sun and the moon  
withdrew their shining, quaked again  
the heart of the earth, flew down on wings  
of petal white from heaven a rain  
of the flower mandara, so that soon  
knee-deep in blossom all men stood ;  
burst forth the peaceful streams in flood,  
shivered the tall trees of the wood  
as the aspen leaf. When all was burned,  
save the white bones, the Mallas made  
a lattice-work of spears around  
that space of charred and of sacred ground  
whereon they lay, and seven days long  
with dance and music, speech and song,  
garlands and perfumes homage paid  
to the relics of the Holy One.

Then gathering up the bones they turned  
their faces toward Kusinara :  
' for since to us was the honour done  
that in our kingdom passed away  
the Lord of the world, 'tis fit and meet  
that we erect a dagoba  
wherein these sacred relics may  
be guarded through the time to come.'  
Thus spake the Mallas and with feet  
falling in solemn cadence they  
passed with their holy burden home ;  
and as they journeyed they beheld  
speeding toward them on the road  
as to the mark an arrow flies  
a naked hermit and his eyes  
as a furnace in a sandpit glowed,  
and in his hand a single flower  
of the mandara bloom he held.  
And as he came them near he cried :  
' Seven days ago the Master died,  
for of the great mandara shower  
raining from heaven at the hour  
his body burned, this single bloom  
fell at my feet on the far hill  
where is my cave, and lo I come,  
ceaselessly journeying to fulfil  
the rites of honour and reverence,  
to the Lord of the world who hath gone hence.  
Therefore I pray ye, Mallas, stay  
your pious course while here I pay  
that homage to the relics due.'  
And the Mallas stayed and lifted down  
by the roadside the golden case  
which held the bones of the Blessed One,  
(most holy here as in any place),  
and with clasped hands and head bowed low

thrice round the case did the hermit go  
and thrice the earth his forehead knew.  
Then passed the Mallas on their way  
with the relics to Kusinara,  
and as the gates they came unto  
met them in glittering array  
ambassadors from kingdoms seven.  
And the first from the King of Magadha,  
shining in splendour as the heaven,  
bowed to the Mallas and, 'tis due  
that a part of the relics to my King,  
to the Lord of Magadha I bring,  
since of the same, the warrior caste,  
was the Lord Buddha ere he passed  
into Nirvana ; and to hold  
the relics for all time to come  
will the King build a mighty dome,  
in substance of the purest gold,  
which from a lake of sapphires blue  
as the sun from heaven shall look through,  
and honoured with a mighty feast  
shall the relics be : ' now when he ceased,  
upspoke in words of like portent  
one whom the Likkhavi had sent,  
glorious as he of Magadha :  
spoke in like speech the Koliya,  
and the kin Mallas of Pava.  
And from the Sakiyas there came  
likewise an embassy to claim  
as the others shared to share the same.  
' For yours is the land,' their discourse ran  
where the life was ended, which began  
beneath the palms of Kapila.  
And the Brahman of Vethadipa,  
as Brahman and as warrior  
likewise in fervid speech made claim

by right of rank to share the same  
 as the others. But the Mallas cried  
 to the Brethren : ' Lo ! they speak in vain  
 asking the relics ; since he died  
 within the Mallas' broad domain  
 'tis fitting that the relics lie  
 complete beneath the dagoba  
 which with our hands upraised on high  
 shall shine above Kusinara.'  
 Thereat the Brahman Dona mourned  
 the coming strife, and thus he warned  
 the Mallas and the empires claiming  
 to guard the bones of the Holy One :  
 ' Strive not at all, for every dart  
 thou drivest in another's heart  
 from curlèd mouth or from twanging bow  
 backward a second course will run  
 to pierce more surely than your aiming  
 the heart and hand whence it did go—  
 since each of all men is a part,  
 since he is thou, since he thou art.  
 This Truth the Blessed Buddha taught !'  
 And the wisdom of the Holy One  
 calmed the tossing waves of the storm begun,  
 for the Mallas and the Empires cried :  
 ' Into eight parts do *thou* divide,  
 O Brahman Dona, the remains  
 with fair division ;' and they brought  
 the golden case and Dona made  
 the fair division and he said :  
 ' Not anything this case contains ;  
 yet, sirs, the gift of the case I crave  
 for it hath held the bones that are  
 holiest in any earth or heaven,  
 and over it a dagoba  
 will I erect.' And the Mallas gave



the golden case—and all was given.  
Thus did the Kings and the Mallas share  
brotherlywise those relics there.  
And from the Moriyas came one  
speeding beneath the midday sun ;  
and ‘Sirs,’ cried he, ‘my lords lay claim,  
being likewise of the warrior name,  
to a share of the bones of the Holy One !’  
But the Mallas answered him that even  
the case that had held the bones was given.  
Mixed with the ashes of the pyre  
were the ashes of those lords’ desire,  
for straight their messenger gathered up  
within the bowl of a carven cup  
the embers of that mighty burning  
and to the Moriyas returning  
gave what of earth had come most nigh  
to the body burned of the Most High.  
And the Moriyas built a golden shrine  
to guard the ashes which though the least  
of the nine parts were yet divine  
more than aught else of earth or sky,  
and in their honour held a feast.  
Thus, Zobeir, did the Buddha die,  
merged in Nirvana utterly,  
his work of love toward men being done.  
But this my telling is as one  
who standing by the shore of the sea  
plungeth a hand into the brine,  
and from his fingers fall the drops  
glittering perchance if the sun shine,  
but when his hand is empty stops  
the tale of glittering crystal drops,  
yet is each drop the mighty sea’s  
and the ocean’s self is naught but these.”

He ceased and made as if to go  
forth from the hall, but Zobeir cried :  
“ Stay yet with us an hour, strange friend ;  
sit by Mansour and make an end  
of those your words of rivalry ;  
stay, for I will not be denied ;  
and of the rosaton let flow  
within your cups the sister streams ;  
stay, for indeed it ill beseems  
the ancient hospitality  
which is a pillar of our faith,  
that while the sun on high is riding  
forth on his way my guest outstriding  
the gates of Zobeir darkeneth.”  
Bowed to his host that ebon man,  
and to Mansour he bowed again,  
who rising from the spread divan  
met bow with bow and pointed where  
between the crescent and the cross  
place for the lotus flower was.  
Thus sat those three together there,  
silent awhile as gently cooed  
the doves in pleasant interlude,  
tinkled the fountain as those bells  
whereof the ancient prophet tells,  
of silver and of ruddy gold  
upon gay ladies’ feet of old.  
Then “ Thanks,” said Zobeir, “ thanks to you,  
who come to us mysteriously  
out of the east and have unwound,  
a poet from a single clue,  
the web of Buddha’s history.  
But what of truth you may have found  
I care not ; this alone I know :  
that as a spring from palmy mound  
so do your words of eloquence flow

and prank with bloom the desert round.  
Greater than sweetly so to sing  
as that men's hearts to tears are wrought  
for great deeds done the chronicling,  
for fair loves lost remembering,  
by Allah upon earth is nought.  
And in our Araby of old,  
with timbrels and with triumphing,  
in marriage robes of white and gold  
danced forth the women of the tribe,  
wherefrom as dawns the star of morn  
a mighty poet had been born.  
The women with the men came forth  
secure that never sneer nor gibe  
could reach them more from any foe,  
lest branded by their poet's wrath  
down the long years his name should go.  
Four things of old we Arabs had :  
for diadems the turban wound,  
for houses tents, for trenches swords  
and poems sung at the fair Ocadh,  
whereof the imperishable words  
were history and fame and law,  
which knowing, none need study more.  
Such was the world the Prophet found,  
and as a weapon thick with rust  
into the fiery furnace thrust,  
and drew it forth an angry red,  
and smiting at the anvil's head  
fashioned thereof a white new blade  
which in the hands of heroes held  
the world unto the Faith compelled.  
For as alone in Hira's cave  
upon Al Kadr that night of the year  
which than a thousand moons is more  
his mind to deepest thought he gave,

in the horizon's highest part  
a being of mighty power he saw  
who gradually drawing near  
stood at the last two bows apart—  
and he revealed what he revealed.  
For in his hand a silken screed  
he held and bade the Prophet read.  
And when he could not : ' Read,' said he,  
' what here is written plain for thee,  
in the name of the Lord who hath created  
all things that are and gave the pen  
that man should use it unto men.'  
With that he vanished and amated  
the Prophet knew that he was he,  
even the Archangel Gabriel,  
sent down from heaven thus to tell  
the will of God that he should turn  
his mind those lesser arts to learn,  
which till that hour he had ignored  
as in the strife the naked sword  
ignores the scabbard. Soon he knew  
what of those lesser arts was due.  
And on a certain day it happed  
that pensive in his mantle wrapped,  
as on the evil speech he mused  
which the Koreish against him used,  
once more unto him Gabriel came  
and on the horizon loomed the same  
nor less nor greater drawing near.  
And ' O thou coverèd arise,  
and preach and magnify the Lord  
and make thy soiled garments clear ;  
leave me to deal with him who lies,  
saying that this My very word  
is but of magic : cursed be he,  
and cursed again eternally :

him will I cast where he shall dwell  
bound in the lowest hell of hell.'  
Thus spake the angel Gabriel.  
No more the Prophet of the Lord  
covered his face, but preached the word  
which on Al Kadr the night of power  
sent to the lowest heaven down,  
to him by Gabriel was made known  
in portions as to suit the need  
imperious of each early hour,  
and from this heaven-planted seed  
spread Islam as a creeping flower  
over the desert leaves of green.  
What matter burning sands or skies  
to the flower whose root is Paradise?  
And first to pluck the bloom I ween  
was the old Khadijah who had been  
mother and mistress, wife and queen  
unto the Prophet through long years  
of doubt and danger, hopes and fears.  
Second to pluck was Ebn Nawfal  
the Christian learned in Hebrew lore  
who when he found how Gabriel came  
unto the Prophet as before  
the angel unto Moses came,  
knew and declared they were the same.  
Third of believers, first of all,  
by right of doing and of daring,  
by right of peril seizing, sharing,  
by glory of the green cloak worn  
through the long watches of the night  
victorious of the Prophet's flight,  
whereof with coming of the morn  
Islam unto the world was born,  
was Ali, Portal of the Faith.  
The first were these, when these were won,

‘Though on my right you set the sun,  
on the left the moon, you shall not stay  
my enterprise,’ the Prophet saith  
unto his kinsmen, as they pray  
their kinsman that he seek not death  
—preaching against those idols fair  
Allat and Ozza, gods that were  
gods till he came, for Araby.  
And the Koreish against him made  
a pact together and they laid  
its words within the Kaaba  
and the years passed by and ‘You shall see  
that the words inscribed against me  
by the worm of the Lord devoured are,’  
said the Prophet, and writhing out and in  
the worm had eaten the words of sin.  
Thus Faith was born to some who doubted,  
but of the Koreish many flouted  
the evident miracle of the Lord.  
They doubted when on the star-strown track  
borne on the wings of Alborak  
unto Jerusalem he came  
and rapt to the seventh heaven heard  
the very speech of God, the same  
that Moses heard on Sinai.  
They doubted though each golden word  
soareth beyond the poet’s pen  
and by the Prophet given to men  
yet in the essence of God doth lie  
eternal uncreate and upon  
a vasty table by God’s throne  
as a likeness from a mirror thrown  
its words are writ and the decrees  
of the past and the future lie with these.  
And once a year the whole was shown  
as a book to the Prophet silk enwrapped

adorned with gems of Paradise.  
And when upon a day it happed  
that the poet Labid witty and wise  
saw by his heathen poem placed  
a chapter on the temple gate—  
fresh from the throne of God descended,  
this reading he was all amazed  
—vowing that words divine as these  
must be of heaven and straightway ended  
his ancient vain idolatries ;  
and joined the Faith and met the hate  
of Asad's Al Moallakât  
with verse of fang as sharp as they,  
and of the Prophet well deserved,  
for nought of skill to sing or say  
unto the Prophet of God was given  
save when the very words of heaven  
upon his mind like granite graven  
for man's salvation he preserved.  
Thus saved were a chosen few,  
but as a stream the enmity  
of the Koreish against him grew,  
fed with a rain of miracle.  
And they determined he must die,  
and of each tribe one sword must be  
steeped in his heart's blood equally.  
But vain were plots and coward sword  
against the Prophet of the Lord,  
for from high heaven the warning came—  
borne upon Gabriel's wings of flame.  
' Arise, O Prophet, and depart  
even to Medina, but beware  
that you go secretly, go hid  
in the grey friendliness of night,  
lest with the life-blood of your heart  
the hatred of the tribes should dare

the purpose of the Lord to blight.'  
And as ordained the Prophet did  
and found his victory in flight.  
For on the eve of the very day  
that the angel spake he found a way  
out of his house, and Ali lay  
upon the couch as the Prophet used,  
and in the green cloak swathed amused  
the murderers, gazing one by one  
through a crevice in the wall upon  
the lion of the Lord thus keeping  
the vigil of the Lord by sleeping  
tranquilly heroically  
as the Prophet fled to victory.  
And with the first of the coming dawn  
lean and hungry the blades were drawn,  
and standing by the Prophet's door :  
' As cometh forth the Hashimite  
our hate shall in our swords unite  
striking together, none before  
none after other, that on all  
equally the blame may fall,  
and of his kinsmen none shall dare  
avenge this deed which all shall share.'  
Thus spake they communing without,  
and at the coming of the light  
ravenous eyes and blades were bright.  
Gently came Ali back from dreaming,  
and as he turned on the couch about  
the Prophet's mantle fell on the ground  
since over was the night of seeming,  
and he arose, and now for shame  
the swords into the scabbards came,  
and going forth the tribes he found  
and as a lion lion-hearted  
laughed as he told how had departed



the Prophet by the road of the Lord.  
But of the Prophet, one for friend  
fled from the city forth with him,  
fled by the stars o'er the desert dim ;  
'twas Abou Bekr, and first had end  
their flight within the cave of Thaur.  
And the spider came and weavèd o'er  
the mouth of the cave his veil of gauze  
and the doves laid their eggs before,  
making the murderers to pause  
and onward pass upon their way :  
' For if the doves of heaven lay  
their eggs, the spider weave his toil  
before the cave, 'tis very sure  
that the Prophet hideth not within.'  
Thus spake the Koreish, thus did foil  
spider and dove those men of sin,  
but scarce could Abou Bekr endure  
their voices echoing weird and thin  
adown the galleries of the cave—  
fearless for self his whispered grief  
sought in a whisper for relief :  
' Here are we twain and they a score,  
if they enter in I cannot save  
the Prophet of Islam.' ' We are twain,  
answered the Prophet, ' but in vain  
they seek us, for with us one more  
these stony galleries hath trod,  
one more, and He is Very God.'  
Thus of the Flight and thus he came  
unto Medina, and his name  
waxed as the scimitar of the skies  
from victory to victories,  
till at the full the moon unfurled  
floodeth with Islam all the world.  
But of the battles I would tell,

of Bedr the first, by the desert well,  
when the Prophet and the Ansar went  
out from Medina in array  
to meet the Meccan caravan  
returning from the Syrian mart ;  
but the men of Mecca did as they,  
guarding their treasure and they sent  
spies to spy out the winding way.  
And these returned to glad the heart  
of the general Abu Sofyan.  
Safe is the precious merchandise  
elusive from before the eyes  
of the Medinans, but in vain  
are Syrian stuffs and gold and gain  
while couchant in the desert lies  
the Man of deeds and prophecies.  
On fared the men of Mecca, on  
farèd the Prophet and his men,  
and these to those were as five to ten,  
and the Prophet camped as evening fell  
at Bedr before the desert well.  
All night was rain, but the sun outshone  
with the first of the morn, ordained to blind  
the eyes of the Meccans, and on the wind  
rode Gabriel with his company,  
to fight for Islam, and they stayed  
the onslaught while the Prophet prayed.  
Then from his hand the Prophet cast  
stones toward the Meccans, and ' Advance,  
cover with shame their countenance,'  
and men and angels, sun and blast  
fell on the Meccans presently.  
The battle joined and a moment stayed  
the fate of the world in the balance swayed  
with the swaying of the linkèd strife ;  
then turned and fled those Meccan men,

careless of all but each his life,  
and the Ansar followed sword in hand  
and smote them down in the wet deep sand.  
Dead lay the Meccans on the plain,  
yet on their faces written broad  
lingered their hatred of the Lord  
and of his Prophet, and he came  
and called each dead man by his name :  
‘ O worthless fellow citizen,  
O sneerer that wouldst not believe,  
that dravest the Prophet forth in vain  
from his own city, but again  
he cometh and doth not deceive  
in battle nor in prophecies.  
Hath not the Lord accomplished here  
those words which by my mouth made clear  
sounded unto thee but as lies ?’  
The dead were silent, and men said,  
‘ Why speaks the Prophet with the dead ?’  
And the Prophet turned, and ‘ Know,’ said he,  
‘ that these do hear as well as ye,  
but cannot answer ;’ thus was done  
the will of the Lord and the battle won.  
And the Prophet to Medina came.  
But of the battle of Ohod,  
where since they harkened not to God  
who by the voice of the Prophet spake  
crying to them that they should not break  
their line of battle, lured away,  
I speak not, for their passing shame  
obscured not more the Prophet’s fame  
than a mist the sun on a springtide day.  
The Prophet in Medina stayed  
and round Medina walls he builded  
and dug a trench as the Lord willed it,  
whereat the Meccans were dismayed,

and unto Mecca went their way,  
for first in Araby of all  
around Medina was this wall,  
and in the desert bold to die  
men dared not scale those ramparts high,  
since unto them it seemed that death  
breathed from the walls a deadlier breath  
than in the desert flying fair  
upon the shaft that cleaves the air.  
And with his hand the Prophet writ  
unto the kings of all the earth  
letters wherein he told the birth  
of Islam, and the benefit  
now upon earth and then in heaven  
which to the faithful would be given.  
First to the Emperor of Byzance  
Heraclius, pale of countenance,  
as now afoot he doth advance  
victorious from Nineveh,  
afoot adust athirst, and yet  
that dusty heel of his is set  
upon the Persian monarchy :  
he is the Emperor of the East,  
and yet he fares as fares the least  
of all his men, nor mounts a beast  
of all the thousands following him,  
but as a simple palmer clad  
he fareth, and his heart is glad  
coming anigh Jerusalem ;  
for lo ! the True Cross borne before,  
wrenched by his arms from pagan hands,  
unto the Holy Sepulchre  
he beareth, and he stays to read  
by the roadside the Prophet's screed.  
He readeth and he brayeth loud,  
and as the ass he understands,

for 'Who may the Prophet of Islam be  
who dareth thus to write to me?'  
but he laughs best who laughs the last,  
and the white missive fluttering cast  
by the wayside is for a shroud  
to wind his Syrian empery.  
And likewise unto Chosroës  
Monarch of Persia writ the Prophet  
as to Heraclius he had written;  
and Chosroës with like madness smitten  
did rend the letter and morsels of it  
flew from him on the wind as flew  
his satrapies and provinces,  
when Islam wrought the world anew,  
Now to the Prophet's side there came  
one with an all resplendent name,  
Khalid, the Sword of God, who drave  
at Ohod to a bloody grave  
hosts of the faithful ere his sword  
became the weapon of the Lord.  
Thus fortified the Prophet turned  
his mind to that for which he yearned  
and with himself alone he musèd,  
nor to Abou Bekr nor to Aïcha,  
who best of friends and of spouses were,  
the workings of his thought made clear.  
For thus the Prophet ever usèd  
when with celestial alchemy  
his dreams he turned to destiny.  
Behold where white for all men's eyes  
Mecca the Holy City lies  
and the old hills look down on her  
for ever from their crevices.  
This to recover, this regain  
was the thought that teased the Prophet's brain.  
For what could truces signed avail,

what rites fulfilled without the pale  
of the most holy Kaaba ?  
and though unarmed and few by few  
he had sworn that he and his should do  
such duties as religion bade,  
then fare forth harmless on their way,  
ever the Meccans said him nay.  
Therefore his orders sent he forth  
southward and westward east and north  
and the numbers of the faithful grew  
within Medina, but none knew  
wherefore he bade them thus draw near ;  
yet as the arrow in the bow  
they waited on the Prophet's word,  
ten thousand men of martial gear :  
and now at last these faithful heard  
the order how they had to go  
and crowning all the mountain's crests  
which toward the holy city face  
gather the brushwood of each place  
and wait thereon his new behests.  
Thus fared they forth at morn, and night  
saw upon every rocky height  
an hundred men and every one  
stood by the brushwood he had won.  
Then came the word, ' Let each man light  
his pile,' and opening one by one  
a circle of ten thousand eyes  
glare upon Mecca where she lies  
within the hollow of her hills.  
And from their sleep the Meccans waken  
and with mighty dread their souls are shaken.  
And Abou Sofyan, he who led  
at Bedr their battle, he who fills  
within the city the first place,  
towards Medina they have sped,

if haply he the Prophet find  
 and gather at his hands some grace.  
 Forth in the wintry night he went  
 towards Medina, and the wind  
 blew here and there and the fiery hair  
 of the hill-tops streamed and shadows sent  
 across his path and jinns did ride  
 to flout him at his ass's side,  
 and in the air strange shapes did play,  
 and voices whispered in his ear :  
 ' Lost, thy cause is lost this day,  
 and thou shalt plead and thou shalt pray  
 before the accursed Hashimite,  
 if haply he thy pleading hear,  
 if thou gain to him this wild night.  
 Thy father's ancient gods are we,  
 the gods that ruled in Araby,  
 and on the tempest lo we flee  
 before the accursed Hashimite.'  
 Onward he passed, when lo a man  
 upon a mule was at his side :  
 ' If thou be Abou Sofyan,  
 and toward the Prophet thou art sent.  
 'Twere best together we should ride.'  
 He spake and the twain together fared,  
 and as the Prophet's camp they neared,  
 between the torches of his tent  
 they saw him and his voice they heard.  
 ' Art thou convincèd now that one  
 God there is and beside him none ?'  
 And Abou Sofyan answering said :  
 ' Were there another God than he,  
 then had he better holpen me.'  
 And the bats flew around his head  
 and in the glare of the torches' light  
 the eyes of the Prophet gleamèd bright.

‘Dost thou acknowledge now that I  
am the Prophet sent by God on high?’  
‘Pardon, O Hashimite, if doubt  
yet dwelleth in me—will not out.’  
Thereat his fellow-wayfarer  
who stood beside him whispered, ‘Swear  
or in an instant thou shalt die.’  
And Abou Sofyan gazed once more  
upon the Prophet’s blazing eye  
and his eyes fell and so he swore :  
‘No other God there is but God  
and his Prophet he is Mohammad.’  
‘Then get thee back by the pathway trod  
and to the Meccans speak, declare  
that none of evil aught need fear  
who in thy house inclosèd are,  
or in the holy Kaaba.’  
Thus spake the Prophet and again  
sped Abou Sofyan o’er the plain  
and the Prophet’s word delivered  
unto the Meccans, and most sought  
safety within his spacious court,  
or in the holy Kaaba.  
And the sun upon the earth had risen  
when moving in fourfold division  
the army of the Prophet came  
unto the gates of the Holy City,  
and peacefully they entered in,  
for the Prophet’s word to all was ‘Pity’—  
though in the hearts of most that name  
but little from their hate could win  
and least from Khalid’s Bedouin  
who as the racing coursers strain  
strained to come at them—not in vain.  
For at the turning of a street  
as these fare forward fiery eyed,



lo ! flights of arrows rattling greet  
their coming and they fall like hail  
about their heads, about their feet,  
and gazing upward they espy  
within a circle fortified  
armed with their hate their enemy.  
Now not the Prophet's words avail,  
for Pity's self the arrows pierce  
and with their friends she is a-dying,  
and as a single arrow flying  
so on these Meccans fly the fierce  
sons of the desert and from the hill  
whereon he stood the Prophet saw  
fall of the Meccans many a score.  
And wrath the Prophet's heart did fill  
seeing his order disobeyed ;  
but when from Khalid's lips he knew  
how first the Meccan arrows flew  
melted his anger, and he said :  
' Ever the Lord ordaineth best.'  
Then from the hill-top went he down,  
the Prophet to the holy town.  
Home to her home had Islam come  
as the eagle cometh to her nest,  
and north and south and east and west,  
gazing o'er Araby she saw  
none but obeyed her equal law.  
And seven times beneath the dome  
touched the Prophet with his staff that stone  
of heavenly things on earth alone,  
and seven times he walked around  
the circle of the temple's ground ;  
then turning to his men he said :  
' Hurl me the heathen idols down.'  
He spake and as he spake they did.  
And his promise he did not disown,

for all are pardoned, all may go  
fearless and scathless to and fro  
within without the holy town,  
save of the slanderers only one,  
a woman vile of liling tongue  
who with her rhyme the Prophet stung  
and as a gadfly now he brushes  
from his ear and 'neath his heel he crushes,  
and of the plotters three must die,  
ripe-rotten, steeped in infamy  
that their corruption rose on high.  
Thus was the will of the Lord made good  
and as a falconer draws the hood  
back from the yellow piercing eyes  
of the peregrine upon his wrist  
and casting loose, 'Fly free,' he cries ;  
so cried the Prophet as he drew  
the hood from Islam and he flew  
the world for quarry never missed.  
Young, ah ! young is the falcon bright  
wheeling around in the clouds of white,  
but old the falconer ere his time  
and furrowed deep the brow sublime,  
with the furrows that each new ploughshare  
leaves in the driver's brow of care,  
and as more rich and as more rare  
(and what more true, more rich, more rare  
than Islam ?)  
so deeper sunk are the furrows there.  
And the last pilgrimage he made  
and unto Allah thus he prayed :  
'Allah, behold my message given,  
my task accomplished : ' and his hair  
black once as a raven's plume was white,  
his body bent and everywhere  
the marks he bare of the great fight

between the powers of earth and of heaven.  
And as the summer heats again  
beat merciless the arid plain,  
so surged the fever to his brain  
and sleep he sought but sought in vain.  
Therefore upon a night of June  
the Prophet from his couch arose,  
and treading softly under the moon  
he sought the place where his friends repose  
until the coming of the Lord.  
And in the silent cemetery  
he prayed and then he spake : ' O ye  
who wait Him here and have seen with me  
the first fulfilment of His word,  
lie still and in your graves rejoice,  
for ye have made the wiser choice  
than those who linger after ye.'  
And he returned him home and said :  
' To choose between the life on earth  
and the presence of Very God in heaven  
unto the Prophet hath been given,  
and the presence of God hath the Prophet chosen.'  
And the Prophet lay upon his bed  
and the soul of Araby was shed  
in tenderness about his bed.  
And gold and silver and all of worth  
in alms unto the poor he gave,  
' For 'twere unfit that the Prophet hold  
within his hand one piece of gold,  
when before God he stands on high.'  
But with the dawn his malady  
had much abated and he willed  
once more the temple entering  
once more the people to rejoice.  
And on that day was the temple filled  
with rich and poor, and they heard the voice  
of Abou Bekr the Prophet's friend.

And none did doubt but that now the end  
 was come of the Prophet's prophesying,  
 yea, all believed that now he lay  
 upon his couch and was adying.  
 And for the Prophet all did pray,  
 and Abou Bekr in the pulpit stood  
 speaking such words as most seemed good.  
 Sudden a pause and 'It is he,  
 the Prophet cometh,' and as a stream  
 before the barge of a king divided,  
 so must that crowd of the faithful be  
 as moving slow majestically  
 the Prophet through the Faithful came,  
 on the arm of a friend supported, guided,  
 trembled his body but how bright  
 is now upon his face the light  
 of joy for the great life's work well done,  
 of joy for the rest from work well won.  
 And now the pulpit steps he seeks,  
 and for the last time lo ! he speaks  
 unto the faithful, and his word  
 rings true and clear that all may hear  
 within the temple, nay, those heard  
 even who stood without but near.  
 'By Allah ! none can say me nay  
 for any deed of my life to-day :  
 nought have I sanctioned here below  
 but Allah willed that it should be so.  
 Nought have I held on earth forbidden  
 but as Allah in the book hath written.'  
 Then with Osâma did he speak  
 who should lead the faithful against the Greek.  
 'Forth with thy army fare,' said he,  
 'and the blessing of God abide with thee.'  
 Thus spake the Prophet and again  
 his couch he sought, and Aïcha laid

upon his bosom her fair head,  
and the last pangs of mortal pain  
quivered through him, and 'Allah! aid  
thy Prophet in his agony,  
and Gabriel be thou near to me.  
Allah! thy pardon grant to me,  
unite me with my friends on high!  
Eternity in Paradise!'  
Thus in an infinite ultimate sigh  
ended the prophet of Araby  
and all the world, and heavy lies  
upon Aïcha's bosom his head,  
and closed are those holy eyes  
which in the book of God have read.  
The Prophet not his work is dead —  
but still Aïcha dreams he sleeps,  
and as she watches gently weeps.  
Dead is the Prophet, but the word  
which from the angel of God he heard  
abideth with us in the Book,  
where, an ye will it, we shall look,  
as thou, O John Mansour, didst take  
from the Bible instances that make  
thy tale of Barlaam fair and bright,  
and thou, O man of India, brought  
the tribute of thy Buddha's thought  
to be to us for great delight;  
so, an ye will it, I display  
such of our jewels carelessly  
as might a merchant plunging deep  
his hand within his precious heap,  
and drawing forth at random some  
of the many jewels there, secure  
that which of all may chance to come  
into his hand are perfect, pure,  
of equal orient with the rest

slipped by his fingers in their quest.  
Allah ! there is no God but he,  
he is himself alone, he liveth,  
he sleepeth not nor slumbereth ;  
his are the heaven and the earth.  
All that hath been that knoweth he,  
he knoweth all that is to be,  
and none shall aught of these things know,  
save in so far as he willeth so.  
Over the earth and the heaven his throne  
extendeth and his power is shown  
upholding earth, upholding heaven,  
nor are they unto him for burden.  
And Al Koran he hath sent down  
confirming what before was known.  
And Adam of black clay he made  
and to the angels of heaven said :  
‘ Worship ye Adam whom I made.’  
And all the angels worshipped Adam,  
all save the chiefest angel Eblis.  
And the Lord said : ‘ What reason is  
thou fallst not down nor worshippes  
this Adam whom of clay I made ? ’  
And Eblis answered God : ‘ I am  
more excellent than Adam is,  
since me of subtle fire thou madest,  
him but of clay.’ ‘ Then get thee down  
from Paradise, for lo, thy pride  
shall not in Paradise abide,’  
said the Lord, and Eblis gat him down,  
and as he went he asked for grace  
until the judgment.  
And the Lord granted for that space  
respite to Eblis, but Eblis cried :  
‘ Since by Thy will I am depravèd  
verily now will I lie in wait

for man in every pathway strait,  
 and from the left hand and the right  
 and by the day and by the night  
 will I come on him that his sins  
 may make it that he ne'er be saved.'  
 'Despised and driven away go hence  
 and for thy followers verily  
 hell will I fill with them and thee,'  
 said the Lord, and Eblis gat him thence  
 and unto Adam's side he wins  
 standing with Eva by the tree.  
 And how he tempted and how they fell  
 by Mansour hath been spoken well  
 within the telling of his tale  
 of Barlaam and of Joasaph,  
 for much of truth their history hath,  
 though of the whole the Christians fail.  
 But what of Adam fallen to earth?  
 Of heavenly things he felt the dearth,  
 and to the Lord in heaven he cried:  
 'O Lord, no longer now I hear  
 the angel's voice as while standing near  
 I heard it at thy holy side.'  
 And the Lord answered: 'Many days  
 shall pass before my angel's praise  
 thou hearest in heaven but thou shalt raise  
 upon the earth a temple fair  
 such as in heaven about my throne  
 thou hast seen the angels' hands prepare.'  
 Thus spake the Lord and Adam came  
 nigh unto Mecca and alone  
 he sought the first of the building stone,  
 but sought in vain until the same  
 from mountains five the angels brought  
 in massy blocks which Adam wrought;  
 And from Paradise a tent came down  
 of hyacinth red wherein a white

hyacinth was for his delight.  
This is that stone of high renown  
white once but now as black as the night  
which in the temple on the right  
standeth, and wherefore thus from white  
the stone was changed, by woman's touch  
say some or by the sins of man  
say others, but we know thus much,  
that when the waters first began  
to whelm the world the angels hid  
in the Mount Kobaïs as Allah bid  
the stone, but the temple and the tent  
drawn up returned whence these were sent.  
And the place of the temple place of pain  
once was to Hagar when in vain  
water she sought for Ishmael,  
and to the summit of Safa clomb  
and to the summit of Merwā,  
but far and near and near and far  
desolate sands and desert are.  
And coming back she read his doom  
on Ishmael's face and as they tell  
ran back again and to and fro  
between the summits must she go,  
a mother mad with mother's woe,  
thus seeking water helplessly  
for the child who on the desert sand  
stretches to heaven a tiny hand.  
And when to Ishmael cometh she  
distracted : bubbling by his side  
behold the water that she sought  
from the depths of the earth by Allah brought.  
And kneeling down she builded round  
the sand of the desert for a bound  
unto the water and she caught  
the first drops of the springing well,  
Hagar red-eyed for Ishmael,



and gave them unto Ishmael,  
girl-mother in the desert lone  
whose love doth for her sin atone.  
Thus flowed the first of the well Zamzam.  
And the years passed by and to his son,  
to Ishmael came Abraham,  
and the command of the Lord declared—  
how that where stood that heavenly one  
an earthly temple be prepared.  
And as he spake so was begun  
their labour and as Abraham builded  
so Ishmael brought the stone, until  
to the corner of the temple they  
building and bearing made their way.  
Then Abraham said: 'Go seek a stone  
more fit than these this place to fill,'  
and Ishmael sought as Abraham willed it.  
But the angel of the Lord alone  
knew where it lay, that fitting stone.  
And to the Mount Kobais he  
wingèd his way and presently  
returning, in his hand he bore  
the hyacinth black that white before  
was once for joy to Adam's eyes.  
And Abraham placed it corner-wise  
that to the faithful it should be  
visible eternally.  
And Abraham wrought and now indeed  
the temple rose and reached more high  
than Abraham's stature and his need  
met Ishmael who carried nigh  
to his father's feet a vasty stone,  
and Abraham stood him thereupon  
and Abraham wrought until was done  
the temple as the Lord commanded.  
Now Gabriel came and seven times led

father and son the temple round  
and as they went, the corners four  
touched they which are the temple's bound,  
and once they bowed them and once more  
ere by the vasty stone they prayed  
whereon stood Abraham as he wrought.  
And Gabriel tarried and he taught  
how between Safa and Merwa  
'tis fitting that the faithful run  
seven times as seven times ran Hagar  
in anguish for her infant son.  
And Ishmael was the first to run,  
and as he ran he seemed to hear  
her gentle voice within his ear  
crying 'Ishmael, my Ishmael ;'  
and when he stayed there came a tear  
into his eye and he seemed to see  
his mother's face, but he saw not clear,  
his mother's smile, but he saw not well,  
for from the depths of memory  
rose to his eyes full many a tear.  
Next to the valley of Mina they  
followed the angel Gabriel,  
and Eblis met them in the way.  
Said Gabriel : ' Stones to throw thou hast,'  
and seven small stones did Abraham cast  
and Eblis vanished, but again  
in the valley's midst was manifest  
and seven small stones did Abraham cast,  
and Eblis vanished but was plain  
at the end of the valley and again  
seven times the stones did Abraham cast  
and Eblis vanished at the last.  
Then to Arafa and Mozdalifa  
went Abraham and Ishmael,  
and Gabriel taught what duties are

at Arafa and Mozdalifa.

When all these things were marked well  
of Abraham and of Ishmael,  
then was the mission of Gabriel ended  
and God to Abraham spake and said :  
'Go forth and all mankind engage  
to make the yearly pilgrimage  
unto these same the holy places  
and to the holy Kaaba.'

But Abraham answered : 'Lord thy praises  
fain would I tell both near and far,  
and fain would all mankind engage  
to make each year the pilgrimage,  
but Lord my voice would nowise reach  
unto the ears of all and of each.'

Answered the Lord : 'Thou hast to speak  
as I command, and I will see  
that all mankind give heed to thee.'

Then the great stone did Abraham seek  
and when he stood thereon more high  
it rose than any mountains are.

And Abraham cried : 'O men come nigh  
to the ancient house,' and near and far  
echoed his voice and north and south  
and east and west he turned, and his mouth  
was as a cavern opened wide  
as unto all mankind he cried ;  
and from all lands men answered : 'Yea,  
we come, O God, and we obey.'

And Abraham having spoken ended  
and again to earth the stone descended.

But of the prophets of old to tell  
who followed Abraham fain would I  
of Moses speak as on Sinai  
converse he held with Very God,  
of the burning bush and of the rod,

save that time lacks and lacks the spell  
of Mansour's speech, for many an one  
of these our prophets also dwell  
within the Christian's holy pages—  
Noah and Lot and Solomon,  
Aïsa, David, but the son  
of David and how first his name,  
unto the ears of Balkis came  
behold my memory engages,  
and if you will I shall display  
his carpet green for you this day.”  
He ceased, and the Syrians every one  
cried : “ Zobeir speaks of Solomon.”  
“ Solomon reigned when David died  
and horses were for Solomon's pride,  
and on a day they brought before  
the throne of Solomon a score  
of horses fairest, fleetest, best,  
which ever the desert sand had pressed ;  
and Solomon gazed with delight  
upon these horses all the day,  
he gazed until the set of the sun,  
he gazed until the birth of night ;  
and gazing he forgot to pray,  
and the service of God he had not done.  
Too late remembering grieved he deep,  
and swore an oath that he would not keep  
one of the horses which had trod  
under their hoofs his fear of God.  
Therefore he slew them with his hand.  
But when the Lord his piety knew,  
said he : ‘ King Solomon shall not rue  
his deed of piety when he slew  
these horses ; let the carpet stand  
in place of horses for Solomon ;  
and O ye winds, when he standeth on

this carpet green ye are to blow  
 whithersoever he wills to go.'  
 And on his left the Genii stood  
 and his army stood upon the right  
 and Solomon went where seemed him good,  
 and above his head in heaven flew  
 the birds for canopy and he knew  
 the speech of the birds, and on a day  
 Solomon counted the birds that flew  
 over his carpet in array.  
 'And whither is the lapwing flown?'  
 said Solomon, 'for verily  
 if now she tarry on her way  
 chastised shall the lapwing be.'  
 And soon before King Solomon's throne  
 stood the lapwing, and : 'O King,' said he,  
 'I have viewed a country yet unseen  
 by Solomon, I have viewed a queen  
 Balkis yclept and very fair  
 she is and yellow is her hair,  
 and the land is Saba and the sun  
 they worship who have dwelling there.'  
 And Solomon wrote with his hand a screed  
 and to the lapwing Solomon said :  
 'If what thou sayest be truth indeed  
 fly with this word and let it fall  
 at Balkis' feet,' and Balkis read  
 the missive and : 'Ah me !' she cried,  
 'what fate for us doth the missive hide?'  
 And her nobles said : 'O queen for you  
 it is to know what you will do.'  
 And they did nought and Solomon waited  
 vainly an answer till a genius  
 said : 'If thou wilt it, Solomon,  
 Balkis the queen upon her throne  
 will I bring to thee,' and even thus

he did and with fair Balkis freighted  
sitting upon her ivory throne  
flew the genius back to Solomon.  
And by her hand did Solomon lead  
Balkis to view his palaces  
and as they went she cried : ' Indeed  
these be great waters : ' when the glasses  
wherewith the palace floor was laid  
timorously her feet did tread.  
And over the glasses, on and on,  
did Balkis walk with Solomon  
and all the wealth of the world she saw  
spread out her curious eyes before.  
And Balkis said : ' Until this hour  
have I dealt unjustly with my soul,  
but now to God with Solomon  
fain would I body and soul outpour,  
fain would I render up control  
of all my lands and rest upon  
the wisdom of King Solomon.'  
Thus of the Queen of Saba spake  
the Prophet and as his custom was,  
nought from his knowledge did he take,  
but on the word of God relied  
and when that ceased remained tongue-tied ;  
therefore the utmost value has  
each word, each dot of the holy book,  
wherein if one for poesy look  
by Allah he shall be deceived,  
but if for the word of God and how  
with Abraham he shall be received  
among the blessed, living now  
according to the will of the Lord,  
reading he findeth his reward.  
But how the sleepers seven hid  
within the cave at Ephesus

and how Al Rakhim with them slid  
 into the cave somniferous,  
 this tale the Prophet tells to us  
 in simple words as Allah bid.  
 The companions of the cave were seven  
 and when the emperor Decius  
 ragèd against the will of heaven  
 their hearts with constancy were strong  
 and each to the other said : ' Too long  
 have we endured within our ear  
 these words of blasphemy to hear ;  
 our God is the Lord of earth and of heaven  
 to him alone shall our praise be given.  
 Therefore from Ephesus let us go  
 unto the cave whereof we know  
 and maybe that the Lord will make  
 that we perish not for his dear sake,  
 but if he will, far better thus  
 to die than to live in Ephesus.'  
 And as together journeyed they  
 met them Al Rakhim by the way :  
 ' And dear unto God in heaven are ye  
 and dear upon earth ye are to me,'  
 said the dog Al Rakhim, ' and while ye sleep  
 lo I will turn ye and will keep  
 watch that no evil come to ye.'  
 And in the cave they lay and slept,  
 and watch by them Al Rakhim kept ;  
 and from their sleep they waked and one  
 asked of another : ' Hath a day  
 passed since we came within the cave ?'  
 ' A day perchance and the night begun,'  
 answered that other, ' but how old  
 thou seemst in face, this cave how cold,  
 and dark as 'twere a very grave ;'  
 and the seven sleepers hungerèd

and to one of them those others said :  
' Go seek the town and buy us bread ;'  
so he went forth and in his hand  
he bare a coin where curled and grand  
stamped was the head of Decius ;  
and he came unto Ephesus  
and to the breadseller went he  
and gave the coin, but presently  
the breadseller cried, ' Here cometh one  
with the coin of an emperor bygone ;  
surely a treasure under the ground  
this antique hoary man hath found.'  
And to the governor he brought  
that sleeper stepped from out his dream,  
and strange that sleeper's speech did seem  
and strange his tale of how he sought  
but yesterday the cave and how  
his brethren waited even now  
to eat the bread, and the governor  
went with the sleeper and he saw  
those other sleepers standing there  
by the mossy cave with mossy hair  
and things of dream were over them  
and dim and faint their answers came,  
as from a voyager when the shore  
dwindles and dwindles evermore,  
and very soon those sleepers seven  
turned on their sides and soon they slept  
and watch by them Al Rakhim kept  
(for ever faithfully watched he)  
and the sleepers passed from earth to heaven  
and with them must Al Rakhim be  
who watched so long, so faithfully."  
Thus of the sleepers told Zobeir  
and how they won to Paradise,  
and when he ceased he saw the eyes



of all the many gathered there  
fixèd upon him and one cried :  
“ Since of the faiths of Christ and of Ind  
those twain your guests have told and tried  
our faith to wean, let us now hear  
the truth and thus again come clear  
if harkening to them we have sinned ;  
tell us of heaven and what reward  
unto the faithful grants the Lord.”  
“ To gather the pearls of prophecy up  
and pour them forth as from a cup  
drops of the red the yellow wine,  
not spilling one, were gift divine,”  
answered Zobeir, “ but if ye will  
O ye my guests, and ye who fill  
these palmy stretches of my court  
lo will I bring my best of thought,  
and from the bird of memory  
pluck yet a waving plume for ye.”  
And the man of Ind said, “ Sir, your speech  
is as your greeting fair and free  
and lo I will abide with ye  
until the eve and watch ye pleach  
the strands of Islam basketwise  
to hold the jewels of your faith.”  
“ And I,” said John, “ will tarry here  
while the palmy shadows follow the sun  
harkening to what of truth there lies  
in Al Koran—and what of lies—  
and pierce the falsehoods without fear  
as ’twixt the palm leaves strikes the sun.”  
“ Friend,” said Zobeir, “ so thou willst stay  
and rest thee here, lo thou shalt say  
what best shall please thee, for Islam needs  
no buttresses of men nor deeds  
to help her stand who hath withstood

the world in arms in her childhood,  
 and now to fullest stature grown  
 easier friends than foes doth own.<sup>1</sup>  
 Then turned Zobeir and : " They be four  
 our angel chiefs and Gabriel more  
 than the three others honoured is,  
 since unto men the messages  
 he beareth from the Lord on high,  
 Gabriel giver of souls, more nigh  
 to the love of God than any other,  
 and Azrael his darker brother,  
 giver of death and Israfil  
 who shall sound the trump on the judgment day,  
 and Michael friend of the Jews doth fill  
 the plate with food, but of Azazil,  
 now Eblis hight for his despair,  
 compact as they of fire and air,  
 who for man waiteth in the way,  
 of him I have told and how he fell.  
 Now of the genii to tell,  
 these be of fire as the angels are,  
 but yet less subtle, for they love  
 and eat and drink and taste of death—  
 lesser than angels nor above  
 the race of man yet elder far,  
 long before Adam first drew breath  
 these dwelt on the earth and Solomon  
 ever the name of their ruler was.  
 But when corruption came upon  
 this race of the jinns, then Azazil  
 (ere Adam lived and wrought him ill)  
 drave them unto the ends of the earth,  
 yet some remaining, Tamuraph  
 battled with these and fabulous

<sup>1</sup> By profession of Islam the capitation tax levied on non-Mo-  
 hammedans was avoided.

into the fabled mountain Kaf  
they fled and as the legends tell,  
if aught for us have legends worth,  
yet in these fabled hills they dwell—  
peris the fairies floating fair  
mounted on dragons high in air,  
and giants and the race Tacwin,  
the fates, and others of their kin ;  
for manifold as the race of man,  
so is the race of genii many ;  
and more than stands in Al Koran  
of the jinns, that need not credit any,  
but who hath travelled the desert lone,  
hath heard the voice behind the stone,  
met the Bedouin upon the steed  
black as himself may smile indeed  
at the tales of the genii by day,  
but alone at night that man will pray,  
nor think to smile upon his way.  
And verily the jinns shall stand  
before the Lord at his left hand,  
and among them the true believers  
(who of the Prophet were receivers)  
these shall be saved and the others damned  
on the judgment day. But I would tell  
of what to the body and soul of men  
must come to pass in the time of the grave ;  
I tell it though ye know it well,  
that John Mansour may hear again  
of the truth of Islam and the man  
of India yet perchance may save  
his body from the iron maces  
of Monker and of Nakir wielded  
upon the bodies and the faces  
of the sinners as they sit upright  
within their graves in woful plight,

and for his soul that he may shield it  
 from the dungeon 'neath the rock Sajin,  
 whither by evil angels borne  
 it must wait the trump of the judgment morn  
 ere like a truant creeping in—  
 body and soul again together  
 body and soul be damned for ever.”  
 Smiled Mansour, and : “ Tell me, pray,  
 O Zobeir, of the judgment day  
 and the end of the world, when it shall be.”  
 Answered Zobeir : “ No man can say  
 when it shall be, the judgment day,  
 but ere its coming men shall see  
 the greater and the lesser signs ;  
 whereof the first, the sun shall rise  
 in the west and backward over the skies  
 shall pass on his way, and the beast shall walk  
 upon the earth and mark with lines  
 the face of faithful and infidel—  
 and Arabic the beast shall talk ”  
 (loud laughed Mansour), “ and the beast shall teach  
 the vanity of every creed  
 save only Islam. And Dajjel  
 shall come upon earth, and his power shall reach  
 from Ispahan unto Medina,  
 and he is Antichrist indeed,  
 but the Jews shall hold him for Redeemer.  
 And Aïsa at the gate of Lod  
 shall meet and slay the Antichrist.  
 Yea verily shall the Periclyte,  
 who is the Christ sent down from God,  
 upon the great white tower alight  
 east of Damascus ; he shall fight  
 and he shall slay the Antichrist.”  
 “ Pray tell me, Zobeir,” said Mansour,  
 “ of whom you speak : if your Aïsa

be Jesus Christ the Lord, I fear  
 you are in error, for 'tis sure  
 that never upon Damascus tower,  
 though from to-day till the judgment hour  
 it stand, will Jesus Christ descend ;  
 nay, when He cometh it shall be  
 with the Father and the Holy Ghost,  
 equal, eternal, One in Three,  
 and with the whole of the heavenly host.”  
 Answered Zobeir : “ Nay, Christ is the same  
 with ye and with us yet not the same ;  
 for both he is word and spirit of God,  
 born without man of the Virgin Mary  
 by the virtue of the Holy Ghost.  
 But vain for us is the Jewish boast  
 that the steps of Christ have Calvary trod,  
 for a mere shadow light and airy  
 those crucified : not tasting death  
 unto high Heaven did the true Christ pass,  
 and when the Almighty asked him whether  
 the Son of God he claimed to be :  
 ‘ Allah ! forbend,’ he answereth,  
 ‘ that such a claim I should make ever ;  
 thou knowest that I said it not,  
 and ever thy trusty servant was—  
 this lie have evil men begot  
 who bear thy servant enmity.’  
 Thus spake the Christ and swept away  
 with a word what evil men did say,  
 but why do the Christians aye adore  
 with God in heaven two godheads more ?”  
 Answered Mansour : “ Because we see  
 in the words of the prophets read by ye  
 and in our Scriptures written clear  
 that the Christians’ God is One in Three—  
 Three Gods in One, the Trinity.

And, Zobeir, since yourself have said  
that God hath a spirit and hath a word,  
declare that all the world may hear—  
Be these created or uncreated?"

"What if I answer : uncreate?"

said Zobeir. "Then you have averred  
the Christian faith, for whatever be  
uncreate is God and Christ is the Word,  
the Ghost the Spirit— God in Three,"  
triumphed Mansour. "But wait, but wait,"  
cried Zobeir; "what if I abate  
my negative and say : created?"

"Then," said Mansour, "a time hath been  
when without spirit, without word,  
imperfect, mutilate was the Lord."

"Ha!" quoth Zobeir, "but Christ, I ween,  
though the word Incarnate, yet was seen  
walking on earth and eating, sleeping  
drinking and drawing mortal breath,  
the dull days of a mortal keeping,  
died at the last a shameful death  
upon the Cross." Mansour replied :

"In the measure of his mortality  
taken from Mary, Jesus died  
upon the Cross of infamy ;  
but for his immortality,  
the eternal word of God was he,  
nor could he slumber, nor could die."

Said Zobeir : "Therefore ye adore  
the Christ, but with him somewhat more,  
the Cross of wood ; now answer me,  
if this be not idolatry?"

Loud laughed Mansour and : "What of the stone  
within your Kaaba, kissed away  
through ages of idolatry?"

he cried. "With us the Cross is shewn

unto the faithful for a sign,  
for memory of a deed divine."

"Divine, divine, you cry," replies  
Zobeir, and flames are in his eyes,  
"and is our stone that fell from heaven,  
that saw Hagar to Abraham given,  
whereunto Abraham's camel bound,  
watched Isaac for a sacrifice,  
upraise to heaven his prayerful eyes,  
and in the bush the ram was found,  
is not our heavenly stone divine?"

"His camel ! and the Scriptures tell  
but of his ass, and the Kaaba stands  
where on the burning rocks and sands  
nor bush nor any plant can twine  
tendrils nor boughs wherefrom to cleave  
wood for the burning sacrifice.  
Verily Islam's doctors weave  
from woof of truth a web of lies,"  
answered Mansour, and now his eyes  
flamed, and their flames must meet and mingle  
with Zobeir's, for the mind of each  
unto the faith of each was single,  
nor though they strove for aye could reach  
beyond the outer core of speech,  
beyond the form, behind the veils  
where love, not argument, prevails,  
yet were these twain true friends indeed,  
for a friend is a friend, a creed a creed.  
"Therefore," said Zobeir, smoothing down  
upon his brow the stormy frown  
and of the lightnings of his eyes  
stopping the fiery passages  
with hand drawn gently over his brow :  
"Mansour, ye have spoken and I have spoken,  
perchance 'twere best had neither broken

the brittle lance of words at war ;  
but as my friend I prithee now,  
cease and in silence let me draw,  
as the man of Ind and you before,  
the picture of our Islam's creed.  
And if I flash and though I flame,  
remember that you flashed the same  
and I kept silence." With a bow  
answered Mansour, and all gave heed  
unto Zobeir as again he spake  
of the end of the world, as he told indeed,  
when first Mansour his discourse brake.  
" And the next sign will be the war  
waged with the Jews, and the very trees  
shall reveal the hiding-place of these,  
unto the faithful cry : Explore  
my branches in their green recesses,  
for hid within an Hebrew presses  
his skin against my coat of wood ;  
yea, verily every tree and stone  
shall speak as a true believer should  
saving the tree garkhad alone,  
which shall keep silence or amuse  
the faithful, being the tree of the Jews.  
And the whole earth a smoke shall fill,  
and thrice shall the moon eclipsed be,  
and the ancient gods of Araby  
for a little space shall come again,  
and the Euphrates back shall roll  
his waves in Mesopotamy  
and a vast heap of gold reveal,  
ruin of many, body and soul ;  
and razèd level with the plain  
shall be the Kaaba and fires  
shall rage in the Hejjaz, and a man  
of the descendants of Kahtan



shall drive men onward with his stave,  
while through the world a wind suspires  
blowing from Syria Damascene,  
and the souls of the faithful and Al Koran  
their passage out of the world shall have  
its chilly scented wings between,  
and in primeval ignorance furled  
an hundred years shall lie the world.  
These of the greater signs are some,  
but none can say when it will come  
the blast of consternation,  
first of the blasts on the trumpets blown ;  
the heavens shall melt, the stars fall down,  
the angels who in their hands uphold  
the stars in heaven too must die ;  
and flat on the plain will the mountains lie,  
and women who suckle babes shall fly,  
nor think to save them, and much more  
than now unto ye can be told ;  
and the second blast will sound and all  
creatures in earth and heaven before  
this blast shall perish, saving those  
toward whom Allah's pity goes ;  
and this in an instant shall befall,  
and of all living things to die  
the angel of death shall be the last.  
And in forty years will sound the blast  
of resurrection and Israfil  
shall blow this blast and Gabriel  
and Michael too shall stand him nigh  
on the rock of the temple, for restored  
they will be to life by the will of the Lord.  
And like a flock of swarming bees  
men's souls shall gather around these  
filling the space between earth and heaven,  
until to each his body given

they will come before the judgment seat,  
and of Adam first will Allah ask :  
' For mankind wilt thou intercede ?'  
Adam shall say : ' For such a task  
O Lord thy servant is unmeet,  
and if thou sparest my soul indeed  
no more do I crave ;' and Noah thus  
shall speak and Abraham and Jesus  
who is Aïsa unto us.  
' Then shall the Lord declare and say :  
here on the last the Judgment Day,  
behold, of all the prophets none  
dareth confront the judgment throne,  
and for these sinners intercede.'  
Then shall a voice cry out : ' Yea, one  
for these the sinners dareth plead ;'  
and as the star of morn arisen  
upon the awful void of heaven  
shall stand one figure forth alone  
fearless before the Judgment Throne,  
and the hearts of the faithful shall be glad  
seeing the Prophet Mohammad.  
Then shall the Lord demand of each,  
of his days how spent, of his wealth how won,  
of his body to what labour given,  
of his knowledge whereto that did reach  
and therewithal what each hath done.  
And then shall every man begin  
on others to lay his share of sin,  
and when awhile he thus hath striven  
unto the Lord his soul shall cry :  
' O Lord, my Lord, withouten hand  
thou madest me, withouten foot,  
withouten ear, withouten eye,  
withouten mind to understand,  
until within the body shut,

lo I must wander to and fro  
wherever the body willed to go,  
lo I must sin, though innocent,  
within the hateful body pent ;  
therefore I pray deliver me,  
but the body burn eternally.'

And the body unto the Lord will say :

' O Lord, like any stock of wood  
thou madest me, for by no way  
could my hand hold, nor ever could  
my foot walk, nor mine eye could see,  
nor my tongue speak, until this soul  
like a ray of light within me stole.  
Therefore I pray thee punish soul  
for ever, but deliver me.'

But the Lord this parable will propound  
unto the pair as they tremble there  
again in hateful company bound.

' Once a fair garden had a King  
where the fruit was ripe, and gardeners twain  
set the King to guard the fruit ; and one  
being blind could not see anything,  
and the other lame must gaze in vain  
where in the shining of the sun  
apple and quince and pear he saw.

Therefore to Blind Man Lame Man said :

" Upon thy shoulders if I climb  
right easily I shall withdraw  
the fruit from the bough above my head,  
and half for thee and half for me  
shall be for shares : " and thus they did.

But the King came and marked the crime.

And Blind Man cried : " No eyes had I : "  
and Lame : " No feet to reach so high."

But the King bade to set again  
the lame on the blind and an equal pain

unto those sinners did award  
that King, as even I the Lord  
upon thee Body and thee Soul  
that are twin halves of an evil whole.'  
But ere men fare to heaven or hell  
with the balance cometh Gabriel  
to weigh their evil and their good,  
and if Gabriel saith : ' O Lord the scale  
by an ant's weight leaneth for the good,'  
then shall the Lord let doubled be  
the good to him, but if it should  
lean to the side of the evil, then  
an equal weight of the sins of those  
injured by him who have not taken  
vengeance for his misfeasancy  
into the balance Gabriel throws,  
and doubly damned with other's sins  
he misseth Heaven and Hell begins.  
But when the Lord hath sentence given  
must the companions of hell and of heaven  
together pass by the bridge that lies  
o'er the midst of hell and a scimitar's edge  
is not more keen than the bridge's ledge ;  
and as the wind or the lightning flies  
shall the Prophet and the blessed glide  
over the bridge to Paradise :  
but for the damnèd, hooks and briars  
the tenuous pathway shall beset  
and though he fare a little yet  
soon must he slip, soon will he slide  
over the bridge to hellish fires.  
And the name of the bridge is Al Sirat,  
and the first of the hells is under that,  
Jehennam hight, where those must lie  
who did confess one only God,  
but in the path of evil trod.

Here shall infernal torments try  
their souls and bodies, but in the end  
these shall be pardoned, these shall blend  
with the blessed in Paradise, for never  
shall a believer burn for ever.

Ladha, Al Hotama, Al Säir,  
Sakar, Al Jahim are for hell  
to Jew and Christian, Sabian, Magian,  
Idolator, one above the other  
in order placed, where each must dwell ;  
and guardian angels watch them there  
and to these angels do they pray  
that death may end their agony  
for ever, and Al Hawiyat  
is the last and lowest hell of hell  
where in a filthy smoke and smother  
is the hypocrite who with the faithful sat  
making pretence to be his brother,  
or with the faithful of some other  
faith that was ruinous indeed  
unto its faithful, yet a creed.

But of Al Araf the wall to tell  
built between Paradise and hell ;  
here dwell those youths that perished  
in battle, facing ruddy death,  
heroically for the faith  
yet warring thus they disobeyed  
their parents' will, and to the eyes  
of the blessed gazing upon these  
they are in hell, but to the lost  
seemeth Al Araf Paradise.

And the wall Al Araf shall be crossed  
by the blessed who thereon shall sit  
converse to hold with those that freeze  
or burn beneath, for 'tis a joy  
to look upon hell and those within it

whom fire and frost and fiends annoy.  
'And, oh for a draught of Salsabil!  
I prithee Abraham that thou spill  
one drop from the cup within thy hand,'  
shall cry one burning, 'think that we  
oft as we passed o'er the desert sand  
alighted and I gave thee drink  
from the cup that carven curiously  
brimmed with well-water to the brink.'  
But to his friend that was on a day  
Abraham shall speak and say :  
'Yea, verily oft from thy carven cup,  
O friend that was have I taken sup  
as o'er the desert pleasantly  
I farèd in thy company,  
but now behold, thy evil doing  
once upon earth hath brought thee ruin,  
and by the thirst of hell thou must  
now be tormented as is just.  
But lo ! my friend of the days that were,  
though black thy face and branded there  
I see the signet of despair,  
grieve an thou wilt, yet this remember :  
that though thou burnst in mind and member  
and every moment feelst as though  
thou didest hold the sum of woe  
within thy body rent and torn,  
within thy brain which is newborn  
by a perpetual miracle  
to taste anew the pains of hell,  
yet since for all thy wickedness  
Islam thou truly didst confess,  
within a million million year  
from off thy face the flames shall clear  
and on the wings of Gabriel  
shalt thou be lifted out of hell,

and I upon this wall shall stand  
and take and lead thee by the hand—  
by the ways of Paradise that I know  
unto the place where the rivers flow  
Al Cawthar and the River of Life,  
and though we meet those by the way  
who shall shake the head and laugh and say :  
Behold where Abraham goeth now  
with one that branded on his brow  
beareth the word “ Infernal ” graved,  
soon in those milky waters laved,  
whiter than any pearl shalst thou  
rejoice with me that thou art saved,  
and be my friend in Paradise.  
And unto thee in every wise  
shall be as to the lesser blessed.  
For high in the topmost heaven rest  
the prophets and next below repose  
doctors and teachers and all know  
prophets above, martyrs below,  
and 'neath the martyrs simply those  
who having lived a godly life  
have here felicity, rest from strife.  
Yea, in the garden Al Ferdaws  
shalt thou abide and at thy side  
smiling beneath thin veils of gauze  
shall the Hur Al Oyûn be to thee  
for true celestial company,—  
damsels of Paradise dark of eye,  
not made of clay not made to die,  
but all of musk, divine immortal,  
dwelling behind the pearly portal  
of the pavilion which alone  
to thee of all mankind is known.  
And as an hundred men, so thou  
shalt be to them, and in age as now



youthful eternally and again  
thou shalt clasp to thy heart thy wives, for they  
have souls immortal as have men,  
and in a place apart are gay  
with all becoming modesty,  
waiting their lord,—or peradventure  
such pains as plague thee now endure.’  
Thus as he speaks shall sudden rise  
flames like vast towers from below  
and sparks like camels red shall throw  
these flames, and hidden from his eyes  
shall be his friend a little space,  
but when again he shall see his face  
shall Abraham speak, shall Abraham cry :  
‘ O friend, within thee now doth lie  
the fruit of the tree of Al Zakkûm,  
and in thy body now doth boil  
as should the dregs of boiling oil :  
this for thy sins the fitting doom.  
But when thy torments shall be ended  
shalt thou of Abraham befriended  
pluck the fruit of another tree  
which shall bend its branches down for thee—  
Tuba the tree of happiness  
that in the Prophet’s palace is,  
yet of this tree a branch doth reach  
unto the house where dwelleth each  
of the believers in his bliss.  
Yea, verily shalt thou eat of this :  
quinces and nectarines and dates  
and golden figs or pomegranates ;  
as it shall please thee, for this tree  
hath for celestial property  
that whatsoever the faithful will  
presently its boughs fulfil :  
thus, if no fruit but venison



or partridges thy soul desire,  
or robes of silk, or beasts to ride  
that trappings rich caparison,  
these from its fruits shall burst as fire  
bursts from Al Zakkûm at thy side.  
And upon earth of finest flour  
shalt thou most delicately tread,  
as rising from thine amorous bed,  
by the bright fountains or the streams  
where emerald for pebble gleams  
thou wilt to spend a wandering hour.  
And from the throne of God shall blow  
a gentle breeze and gentle motion  
shall agitate the tinkling ocean  
of golden bells that row on row  
shall hang upon the golden trees  
bowing to meet this heavenly breeze.'   
Thus to the friend that burneth must  
from the wall Al Araf speak the just,  
making to shine before his eyes  
the lesser joys of Paradise,  
nor will he speak to him in hell  
of the superabundant bliss unknown  
to all save those around God's throne,—  
bliss that never an eye hath seen,  
bliss that never a tongue can tell,  
bliss that never an ear hath heard,  
bliss that in no man's heart hath been,—  
surpassing sight and touch and word,  
which when the blessed once hath gotten  
straight are those lesser joys forgotten,  
and beyond reach of sound or speech  
with eyes of the spirit more than sight,  
morning and evening, noon and night  
he doth communion hold with God.  
Thus much of Iman boots to tell,"

quoth Zobeir—"Iman which is half  
of Islam as ye all know well,  
being faith in God and in every angel,  
in the Prophet and in the holy book,  
in the day of judgment when the chaff  
from the true wheatsheaves shall be shook,  
and in the absolute decree  
which is for each man destiny,—  
for verily is no man able  
to circumvent the preservèd table,  
whereon from all eternity  
his lot upon earth, his joy in heaven  
or in red hell his misery  
hath been inscribèd ; but of Din  
which of Islam is the other wing,  
and is the practice of the faith,  
now for a short space would I sing,  
that he of Christ who gainsayeth,  
and he of Buddha that remaineth  
with wreathèd brow a-pondering  
may hear and know this sacred thing.  
Fourfold it is and first is prayer,  
and purification practised ere  
we fall to praying and in the morn  
ere yet the first sun-ray be born,  
and when from the meridian  
beginneth to decline the sun,  
and in the afternoon before  
the set of the sun and in the eve  
ere day be ended, and once more  
when the day is shut shall the muezzin give  
notice from every steeple crying  
of every mosque and straight replying  
unto the call to prayer we leave  
our toil or pleasure to adore  
the only God, for 'tis the pillar

of all religion and half the way  
carrieth prayer to God, they say,  
and fasting to his palace door,  
and giving alms we enter there.  
And the inward being of the heart,  
that is of prayer the vital part,  
for vainly on our knees we kneel  
if in our hearts we do not feel  
reverence, devotion, hope arise : "—  
he spake and as he spake the cries  
of the muezzin sounded clear,  
piercing the scented atmosphere.  
And Zobeir quick his discourse staying,  
knelt where he stood and fell a-praying,  
and with him all the faithful prayed  
who of the palms had found the shade.  
And the Man of Ind was plunged in thought,  
but John Mansour the whisper caught  
of the fountains in the stillness spraying  
with drops of glittering water bright  
the marble spaces and the light  
coming and going of the doves  
around the marble fountain playing ;  
and for the nonce his memory flew  
back to the past and the present grew  
more faint as visible again  
his days of boyhood and of youth,  
his father's and Monk Cosmas' loves,  
and how at a leap he did attain  
the helm of power and all the pain  
he had suffered for the sake of the truth ;  
and the Blessed Virgin coming down  
to tend him in her pale blue gown  
and the very words she said to soothe  
his anguish and the universe  
tinct with the quality of heaven,

as unto him the bliss was given  
with the Mother of Jesus to converse.  
Yea, to have looked on Mary's eyes  
is to have been in Paradise  
aye, to have gazed on them is worth  
all other joys that are in heaven :  
then what by these are the joys of earth ?  
Such are the thoughts and the visions flitting  
before the eyes of John as sitting  
he waiteth till his friend Zobeir  
hath made an end of his evening prayer.  
And soon 'tis ended and Zobeir  
will finish what he was a-telling  
when the muezzin's voice first rang  
which for the Moslem as the clang  
of the church bell's reverberant pealing  
is to the Christian—and a sound  
methinks more human since it calls  
from heart to heart, than the bell's rebound  
as the clapper on the metal falls.  
And soon were the prayers of Islam over,  
and soon Zobeir from his knees arose,  
“ And, sirs,” said he, “ to be a rover  
at the fixed hours of prayer is vain  
if the heaven of Islam one would gain,  
therefore no quest for pardon goes  
forth from my lips to thee, Mansour,  
nor, O thou ebony man, to thee,  
that here my prayers have taken me  
forth from your presence, but endure  
our heaven-ordained discourtesy.  
For as of Mecca, so of prayer,  
as well be Christians or Jews  
as never to have journeyed there  
or the hours of prayer to abuse.  
And now of fasting, now of alms,

which of Iman are the other parts :  
his breath who fasteth verily charms  
Allah in heaven more than musk ;  
but the greatest fasting is the heart's  
whereto is hunger but the husk  
of a goodly fruit ; and Ramadan,  
that is the month of the great fast,  
yet after sunset may a man  
eat and drink and love till past  
are the vigils of the copious night ;  
then when a black thread from a white  
he first can tell at the break of light  
must he fast again, and if the moon  
dwelleth in Capricorn (for she  
passeth in years thirty and three  
through all the houses), then no boon  
is the light of the day and the burning hours  
of Ramadan are hours that test  
the souls and bodies of the best.  
But now of alms to tell—the flowers  
of ancient generosity  
were in a nosegay bound together  
once and that scented fellowship  
lends me this little tale for ye,  
bright with the kiss of many a lip.  
Three men in the Kaaba argued whether  
of three great men the freest giver  
were Abdallah nephew of the Prophet,  
or Kais Ebn Saad Ebn Obadah,  
or of the Aws Tribe Arabah,  
and long those three disputed of it,  
till one that heard cried out : ‘ For ever  
will ye dispute, and word and deed  
are as the substance and the shadow,  
therefore my counsel is ye go  
each to his friend and feign a need

ye have not, thus ye shall surely know  
which of the three hath most to shew  
of the fair flower generosity.'  
And they agreed and first did go  
his friend to Abdallah and lo  
found him in stirrup mounting up  
about to take a long journey.  
'O kinsman of the Apostle of God,'  
cried he, 'my weary feet have trod  
the desert of necessity  
hitherward winding unto thee.'  
And straight from the camel's back sprang down  
Abdallah, and : 'O friend,' he cried,  
'take this my camel, take the gown  
of silk, the vests, the golden pieces  
(they are methinks two hundred score)  
but the sword which in the saddle's crease is  
this always let with thee abide  
since in his girdle Ali wore  
that steel which unto me is more  
than all the gold that the earth doth hold.'  
Thus to his friend did Abdallah,  
and the second friend to the second prince  
betook him, Kais Ebn Obadah.  
And when to his door he came a servant  
met him and asked him what his want,  
'For not an hour hath flown,' said he,  
'an hour not twain we have counted since  
first for a score of busy days  
deep sleep her soothing finger lays  
upon my master's brow, but see  
if his servant can do aught for thee,  
such as if woken from the sleep  
which now his weary members keep  
would he I serve of a certainty.'  
And up and spake him friend the second,

how that he travelled and did want  
for everything that gold can grant ;  
and presently that servant reckoned  
unto that friend seven thousand gold  
pieces, 'and more doth the house not hold,'  
said the servant, 'but see thou bear this token  
unto the guardian of the camels  
and a camel and a slave shall he  
furnish for thy necessity.'

And now from his sleep had Kais awoken  
and unto him his servant tells  
of his friend's dry necessity,  
and Kais cried out : 'Thou shouldst have broken  
those chains of sleep which held me fast,  
for with my friend I fain had spoken,  
fain had I found for him somewhat more  
from out the secrets of my store ;  
but lo this day shall be thy last  
of servitude for thou didst well  
as in his hand thou didest tell  
the golden stream in the burning gleam  
of the noonday sun, yea thou art free  
that served our generosity.'

Thus to the second, and thus befell  
to the third of the friends who straightway wends  
to him of the Aws, to Arabah.

And drawing near he meeteth him  
and for that now his sight is dim  
upon the shoulders of his slaves  
posed are the palms of Arabah ;  
but when the fable of the woes  
of the friend surely Arabah knows  
pardon of his dear friend he craves  
that nought hath he of gold in fee  
'but lo these slaves shall be to thee  
for aid in thy necessity,



and if thou take them not ' (for now  
shames him the friend and with many a vow  
will have them not), ' behold I make  
freemen of both,' and so doth take  
groping his way along the wall  
that friend most generous of all,  
he of the Aws, Ebn Arabah.

Yea, generous free the Arabs are  
and truly doth the saying live :  
Only where men have the heart to give  
have the women heart to deny."

Here ceased Zobeir and all to cry :  
" Having told of Islam and the Prophet,  
O Zobeir, deign thou to explain  
after his passing what befell,  
how Islam waxed, for we know not well  
how all the different parties of it  
moulded and cast like the potter's clay  
form but one mighty vase to-day  
whereof the Kaliph is the stem."

And Zobeir smiled upon them  
" And wide," quoth he, " are the water's rings  
which over and over and over lapping  
spread outward from the mighty things  
which when the Prophet passed were happing.  
For Omar came and gazed on him  
within Aïcha's chamber dim  
and all his love gushed forth to hide  
the truth of the eternal sleep  
which now his master's features keep.  
' Liar thou liest lies,' he cried,  
to him who standing at his side  
strove to make clear the truth ; ' the Prophet  
liveth and whoso doubteth of it  
him doth his rebel will deceive.'  
And to the mosque he hies him straight



and to the people speaks : ' Believe  
no word they say of the Prophet dead  
though verily for a space is fled  
his soul to Allah as Moses' did,  
but again he cometh and will not die  
till are extinguished utterly  
all hypocrites and infidels.'

Thus as he raves a door comes open  
on the court of the mosque and the speech is spoken  
which as a fresh west wind dispels  
the smoke of Omar : ' Nought was he  
but the prophet of God and lo if ye  
worship Mohammad, he is dead,  
but the one God liveth and dieth not ;  
now since the Prophet's breath is fled,  
will ye to make apostasy ?'

And all men had these words forgot  
save Abou Bekr who standing there  
spake from the place whence he led the prayer.

And true and mild, yet resolute  
was he and elder than Omar  
by fifteen year, and red his hair  
dyed with a red dye as his beard ;  
but Omar bulked immense like war  
wedded to peace that doth salute  
gently the world as though it feared  
nought but its likeness to the brute.  
And dyed his beard as his friend's was dyed  
and each had all that was denied  
unto the other and their love  
had been as eagle and as dove  
unto the Prophet passed away ;  
yet not a word did the Prophet say  
naming or one of these or those  
whose names Medina's echo throws  
for challenge unto Mecca's walls,

to be for Kaliph, but the die  
this way or that or some way falls  
and this the moment that destiny  
the Kaliph from the future calls.  
For as round Abou Bekr they crowd  
cometh a messenger and bowed  
is Abou Bekr's, is Omar's head  
as to the message they give heed.  
A loadstone message, for : 'Place ! make place !'  
cries Omar as away they speed  
forth from the mosque till face to face  
in the Medinans' meeting hall  
they stand with those who would decide  
with whom the new-born power shall bide,  
two men of Mecca against all  
that the Medinans hold of great,—  
(but what are many men to fate ?)  
And on a bed in a corner lay  
one of the twelve, Sad Obada,  
one of the Pledge of Acaba,  
sick of a fever and he shook  
as through his veins its course it took.  
Him the Medinans loved and they  
almost to him had plighted troth  
ere Abou Bekr and Omar came  
big with the weight of destiny.  
This when he knew waxed Omar wroth  
and : 'Men of Medina, hark,' cried he—  
but Abou Bekr cried : 'Omar, stay,  
and when I have spoken say thy say.'  
Omar was silent and : 'Your fame,  
men of Medina, as a rock  
made all of glittering gold doth shine  
beyond the reach of the tempest's shock ;  
and the words that whispered are by Sad  
(for since he lay in grievous plight

Sad must whisper and friends recite):  
 'These are of gold as red, as fine  
 as are the deeds which they have clad.  
 True, but for ye the Prophet driven  
 forth from Mecca in vain had striven  
 to bear the message of the Lord;  
 but, men of Medina, the true word  
 of me and of mine, of thee and of thine,  
 (turning to Omar), had been given  
 unto the Prophet, for we are  
 of the Prophet's tribe and first to dare  
 are we, but first to do are ye  
 who first for him have waged war.  
 Therefore 'tis fitting ye declare  
 the Vizier, but from us who stand  
 first of the nobles of the land  
 let the Kaliph rise!' 'But twain are we  
 and therefore twain let the Kaliphs be,'  
 cried the Medinans. 'Never so,'  
 hurled as a javelin at the foe  
 Omar for answer. 'Hear him not,'  
 cried Hobab, 'harken unto me  
 who as the stem of the well-rubbed tree<sup>1</sup>  
 give the best counsel and if they  
 will hear ye not, my breath is hot  
 upon their faces, I that roared,  
 Lion of the desert.' 'May the Lord  
 destroy thee, Hobab,' Omar cried,  
 and Hobab in like words defied  
 Omar and drew his circling sword.  
 But Omar upon Hobab rushed  
 and seized the weapon and to and fro

<sup>1</sup> A palm-stem placed for cattle to rub themselves against.  
 A metaphor for one whose counsel is much sought.

surged the Medinans and they crushed  
Sad as he lay on his bed that nigh  
by the weight of his friends he was to die,  
for some there were that fain would go  
with the men of Mecca and some for Sad  
and some for a double Kaliphate.  
But Omar with red rage was mad,  
mad with the righteous wrath of fate,  
and here and there as a giant going  
words and blows as it chanced was throwing  
on Hobab and on all who dare  
claim for Medina any share  
in the rule of Islam and he hurled  
damnation upon Sad enfurled  
in his couch's wrapper, but now his friend  
saw the moment ripe and : ' Make an end,'  
cried Abou Bekr, ' of this dispute,  
and if it please ye now salute  
Omar for Kaliph or an ye will  
Abou Obeidah who shall fill  
right worthily the place.' But : ' Nay,'  
cried the twain together, ' thou hast led  
the prayers of the faithful since the day  
that the Prophet died, and therefore now  
stretch forth thy hand and take our vow.'  
And Abou Bekr as they bad him did.  
And hand upon hand they struck and swore  
faith and allegiance evermore ;  
and of Medinans many an one  
struck hand on hand and pledged his faith.  
And those for Sad seeing now was won  
the Meccan victory forthwith  
sware, for they said, ' 'twere best to choose  
this Meccan and so choosing lose  
the rule of Islam, for if Sad  
reigned over us, his tribe would be

for ever first for good or bad.'  
So these too sware for jealousy.  
Now all have sworn, save only one,  
Sad in his fever all forlorn,  
vowed to oblivion's silent scorn.  
And forth they fare from the meeting hall,  
and of the Meccans all rejoice  
that Abou Bekr reigns over all,  
and harken to his kindly voice.  
And need hath Islam of one word,  
and need of Khalid's conquering sword.  
For the false prophets have arisen.  
And first Moseilama's yellow face,  
upturnèd nose and dwarf disgrace :  
Moseilama who dared to write  
unto the Prophet for division  
of Islam between ' Me and Thee,'  
now in Yemāma doth unite  
a mighty force, for he shewed an egg  
in a bottle of a narrow neck  
willing their credence thus to beg  
who nothing see, nor know, nor reck,  
and made a Koran for their use  
among his faithful—an abuse  
of all the teaching of the true.  
And though an upstart and as vile  
dog as the desert ever bred,  
not only did he thus beguile  
thousands to follow, but he knew  
the art of war, and Ikrima fled  
disgracefully, and thousands fell  
of the faithful whom this fool had led  
unto the slaughter, and : ' Depart ;  
thou shalt not see me as thou art,  
nor of thine evil-doing tell,'  
writ Abou Bekr to Ikrima ;

‘depart unto the uttermost coast,  
and win thee back the name thou hast lost,  
outbattled by Moseilama.’

And Khalid went to fill his place,  
and glory shone upon disgrace.

For on Yemāma’s plain they met,  
Khalid and false Moseilama,

and on his right did Khalid set  
the city Arabs, and on his left

the sons of the desert, counting thus  
on ancient rivalry to whet

their courage, and : ‘They smile on us,’  
said the townsmen, ‘since we are bereft

here on the right of the desert might ;  
but they shall see that such as we

ask not for teachers in the fight !’

And the battle joined, and a furious wind  
blew in their faces as to blind

with the sand the faithful ; but Zeid, who led  
the men of Mecca, cried : ‘For shame !

ye waver, ye of the glittering name !

close fast your eyes, clinch hard your teeth ;

charge and be counted with the dead,

Paradise won, or live and slay

every apostate here to-day.’

He cried and charged where most did seethe  
the fight, and Paradise he won.

And the greatest of Islam one on the other

fought and fell, bright warrior brother

calling aloud his warrior’s cry

unto his brother, proud to die.

And for he thought his men did shun

the very ramping jaws of death :

‘Woe be to ye for this backsliding,

men of Medina, faint of breath,

and faint of heart, I am clear of ye ;

see, I join me to the enemy,'  
shouted Ibn Cays his men deriding,  
and as he spake he rushed and died  
in the seething mass and his freedman cried :  
' Craven bearer of Al Koran,  
craven bearer of Islam's banner,  
were I if now I feared to die  
even as my master, I his freedman ; '  
thus as he shouted loud he ran where  
his fallen master's banner waved,  
and from his dying hand he saved  
the banner and he fought and fell  
speeding apostates thick to hell.  
With such ensample blazing bright  
furiously charged the rank and file.  
And backward and forward yet a while  
swayed the close-linked line of fight.  
Then of a sudden Khalid knew  
the moment come and in all men's view  
he charged and : ' Ya Mohammeda ! '  
he cried, and ' Ya Mohammeda ! '  
an hundred hundred warriors cried,  
and men of the desert and men of the town  
bore on the vile apostates down  
and the yellow desert crimson dyed.  
' They break ! they break ! They fall away ! '  
cry out the faithful and their charge  
is as Euphrates' wave as large.  
' Fly to the garden, I will stay  
their oncome,' brave Mohakkem cried  
unto Moseilama and he  
fled with a goodly company  
unto the garden and the gate  
they shut, though Khalid follows close.  
And a wall around the garden goes  
which a moment stays the sword of fate.



For the warriors of Islam round and round  
 swarm but no entrance can be found,  
 and barred and bolted is the gate.  
 Then Beraa, one of the Twelve, cries out :  
 ' Lift me on high that I may spy  
 from the top of the wall ; ' and he gazes down  
 on the army which the garden keeps ;  
 then with the mighty battle shout :  
 ' Ya Mohammeda ! ' down he leaps  
 and slashing left and slashing right,  
 doth Beraa with that army fight  
 and open wide the gate hath thrown  
 and earned eternal bright renown  
 who fought and won the gate alone.  
 And as the waters of the sea  
 finding an inlet suddenly,  
 they fall upon Moseilama,  
 and maugrè all his magic art  
 a javelin strikes him to the heart,  
 and maugrè flower of chivalry  
 must all his warriors slaughtered be.  
 But of the faithful many fell  
 to make this mighty victory,  
 of Bedouin, of Refugee<sup>1</sup>  
 and of Medinans long to tell.  
 And tears in Islam's households ran  
 adown fair cheeks and Al Koran  
 lost of its Readers<sup>2</sup> many an one.  
 But Khalid once the fighting done  
 wedded the daughter of his foe  
 upon the field, nor did he know  
 scruple nor doubt nor any fear,

<sup>1</sup> The Refugees were those who fled from Mecca to Medina on account of the Prophet.

<sup>2</sup> The Readers were those who knew the whole Koran by heart.



but laughed and loved and made good cheer,  
though with the blood of thousands slain  
blushed to behold Yemama's plain.  
But Abou Bekr when now he knew  
this deed of Khalid writ and threw  
drops of blood on his grievous writing ;  
but Khalid laughed and cried : ' The maid  
less than the Kaliph was dismayed,  
and such the fitting end of fighting.'  
Thus by the flash of Khalid's sword  
was done the bidding of the Lord  
in Araby, but far away  
on the fat fields of old Chaldæa  
by Tigris and Euphrates' stream  
again the sword of God must gleam,  
and vain was Hormuz' linkèd chain  
to fetter courage and banish fear  
and vain the springs which the Persians held  
and Khalid to the fight compelled,  
' For,' said he, ' these springs shall be  
to the braver of us twain,' and sent  
challenge to Hormuz whom he slew  
in single combat in the view  
of both the armies and he drave  
the Persian to Euphrates' wave.  
And the crown of Hormuz crushed and bent,  
yet bright with jewels, Khalid sent  
for gift to the Kaliph, with the fifth  
of the spoil and for the crown were told  
an hundred thousand coins of gold.  
And with the crown and with the spoil  
over the desert to Medina  
behold an elephant must pant,  
and never before had the women seen a  
monster of girth so vast, so royal,  
and the women cry : ' Kind Khalid sent

this toy to be for merriment  
unto our children ; great in all  
is Khalid, in his gifts not small ;  
but fain would we the hinges know  
which move the ponderous and slow  
progression of those massy feet,  
fain would we see by what strange hap  
its ears like palm-leaves come to flap,  
and fain the winding tube discern  
which every way the thing can turn,  
right fain pick out its little eyes  
to be for jewels.' Thus they greet  
in Araby the victories  
of Khalid and the first he gains  
is this, the battle of the chains,  
since Hormuz bound his men together  
in a knot for Khalid's sword to sever.  
And havock-hunted o'er the plain  
fled those that could unto Madain,  
' twin city ' of Persia, built upon  
the place where once was Ctesiphon,  
where once Seleucia and the flow  
of Tigris sweepeth by its walls,  
and Tigris to Euphrates calls  
for here those mighty streams draw near  
and each the other's voice doth hear ;  
and many voices once they heard,  
these waters as in evil hour  
upreared its shadowy head that tower  
of Nimrud which is Babel's tower ;  
and of all languages one word  
they know and whisper as they flow  
past Babylon which cannot hear  
now since for many and many a year,  
all grass-bemantled, grass begrown  
is that her once most delicate ear,

and blocked the portals of her eyes  
and lapped in grassy mysteries  
are the ways and windings of her street  
which sounded once with lovers' feet.  
Yea, all her glories now are flown.  
But for the battles of Khalid, now  
awoke the Persians and they said :  
' Best with Arabian blood and bow  
are the arms of Araby combated.'  
Therefore the Beni Bekr they called  
to arms, that tribe of Araby bred,  
yet long to the Persian yoke enthralled,  
and an Arab chieftain over these  
they set, and the veteran Bahman led  
the troops of Persia, but Khalid knew  
their doings and across Euphrates  
to the eastern bank he passed and drew  
the enemy forth and long they fought  
and doubtfully till the ambuscade  
which in his wisdom Khalid made  
sprang on their rear and ruin caught  
Persian and Arab renegade.  
This was the battle of Walaja,  
and Khalid to his warriors spake :  
' Warriors ! conquerors ! see what are  
the riches of Persia, fatness drops  
from her paths, her very stones do bake  
to bread, and, warriors, nothing stops  
and all things call on ye to make  
this holy war—these waving fields,  
and maids and matrons whom ye take  
by the right hand captive, for judgment written  
gives these to those who shall have smitten  
their heathen lords and Persia yields  
beauty divine enough to slake  
Euphrates' self if all his waters

lustfully craved for Persia's daughters.  
Therefore be true and I will lead ye  
where the best of Persia's best shall feed ye.'  
So Khalid spake and need had he  
thus to make bright the vantages  
falling to his, for everywhere  
the Persian rose, and Araby  
met Araby again and these  
were as the fabled dragon's fangs  
upsprung the dragon's self to tear.  
For first of the battles Khalid fought  
at Allis felt he all the pangs  
of the general of a doubtful field,  
and as he suffered, so he sware  
that if to victory were brought  
the arms of Islam they should yield  
unto the Lord the Victory-Giver  
of the blood of His foes a blood-red river.  
Therefore when now at last they fled  
Persian and Arab renegade,  
unto his troops gave Khalid order  
that of the fugitives none should die  
by the hand of his captor, but all be brought  
into the camp and ranged in order  
line upon line within the bed  
of a dry canal, and so to lie  
that with the falling of each head  
its ruddy torrent should be shed  
as from a fountain : and thus he sought  
to redeem the oath that he had made  
unto the Lord the Victory-Giver.  
And as Khalid ordered, so they did.  
But flow would it not, that blood-red river,  
though for all a night and for all a day  
did the faithful there the heathen slay,  
till seventy thousand heads had fallen.

Then an Arab chieftain up and spake :  
' O Khalid, never shalt thou make  
the blood of His foes in a blood-red river  
flow to the Lord, the Victory-Giver,  
until His waters thou dost call on,  
for verily the Lord hath bidden  
the earth that never upon her face  
shall a man's blood flow for a longer space  
than is the measure of his dress.  
Therefore my counsel is : throw wide  
the flood-gates and the waters hidden  
downward shall flow in crimson tide !'  
And as he counselled, so was done,  
and for three days a blood-red river  
flowed to the Lord the Victory-Giver.  
But Khalid now the battle won  
supped on the field and his arm did rest  
upon a Persian chief, whose crest  
level with the plain that arm had smitten.  
And all the faithful made good cheer  
with the viands and the fritters white  
left by the Persians in their flight,  
such as before had never bitten  
their teeth of ravenous delight.  
And to the Kaliph Khalid sent  
the fifth of the spoil, and ' O ! draw near,  
ye men of Mecca and of Medina,  
Helpers, Companions of the Flight !  
Behold ! the lion of Islam springs  
on the lion of Persia, and he wrings  
his prey from him,' the Kaliph cried,  
when the piles of treasure first he spied ;  
' never on earth shall again be seen a  
Khalid as this—the womb is void,  
exhausted, utterly destroyed  
that bare a lion such as he

to rend the Persian empery !'  
Thus cried the Kaliph as he sat  
an aged man within the gate,  
but Khalid upon Hira moved,  
and Hira fell and Duma fell,  
fair glittering towns—too long to tell  
the pageantry of how they fell—  
save that as basilisk the name  
of Khalid now to Persia proved ;  
(for till he came to Duma shame  
followed the faithful) and the fame  
of Khalid shook the battlements  
of Hira that its people laid  
the keys before him, for they said :  
' Verily now will wall on wall  
upon our heads devoted fall,  
for worse than Khalid's armaments  
is the knowledge that his spies have found  
of the stone that is the chiefest stone  
of all our buildings, which withdrawn  
shall Hira all be overthrown,  
ruinous crashing to the ground.'  
And thus the antique tale which told  
of the keystone in the palace hid  
served Khalid, as indeed now did  
chances and destiny and skill,  
for as a rich man's hoard of gold  
waxeth at usury, so will  
the fame and fortunes of the bold—  
or if such metaphor be old :  
fortune of war as fortune of women—  
empty the cup or overbrimming.  
And of these feats of arms the telling  
is equal to devout long spelling  
of Al Koran, as a night in arms  
is more than many an orison,

though both unto the Lord have charms,  
though both are Islam, both upon  
the sacred tables are enwritten.  
This Khalid knew and having smitten  
the Persian that he did not dare  
move hand nor foot to walk nor ride,  
but Khalid's shadow stalked beside,  
willed Khalid now to make his prayer  
within the holy Kaaba,  
for the holy month had come again.  
But for he willed that none should know  
his pilgrimmage across the plain  
which from Firadh even unto Hira  
stretches, he bad his army go  
in marches easy, dalliance-slow ;  
and that they make but little speed,  
for ten long days beneath the blaze  
he drilled them of the Persian sun  
at Firadh, and when now was done  
the tenth day's drill : ' The army need  
to Hira make but little speed,  
and lo, I follow with the rear,  
and a day or twain shall linger here.'  
Thus to his army Khalid lies,  
and slipping forth in due disguise  
with an escort of a faithful few,  
a faithful few, but ne'er a guide,  
from Persia over Araby went  
Khalid the sword of God and knew  
as never man before nor after  
the windings of the trackless waste,  
and where the springs of water hide,  
and many a desert date did taste,  
of many a desert spring he quaffed, ere  
dawning on Khalid's swordbright eyes  
Mecca the Holy City lies



within the hollow of her hills.  
And every duty he fulfils  
but keepeth always his disguise  
so subtly well that in no wise  
did men even dream as fast he ran  
with the rest from Safa to Merwan,  
or the pebbles in the valley threw,  
or when his lips the Black Stone knew,  
that this the very arm that drave  
the power of Persia to the grave,  
that these the very lips which spoke  
and the false prophet's power was broke.  
And when the duties now were done,  
back o'er the desert Khalid hies,  
and as the soaring falcon drops  
from blue invisible Khalid stops  
the last of his rearguard's lingering feet  
and with them enters Hira's gate ;  
and Khalid's generals come to greet  
their general with : ' Perfay, great sir,  
right well you do in this great heat  
moving with very little stir ;'  
and Khalid smiled, nor did he tell  
of the shadowy flitting he had made ;  
but answered : ' Yea, I have done well.'  
And not a word of all was said,  
nor did the Kaliph come to know  
of Khalid's stealthy piety  
till many and many a day had fled.  
But now began a right brave show  
of arms in Syria, and the glow  
cast from those watch-fires long ago  
brightly upon us yet is shed.  
But long too long would the telling be  
if I unfolded unto ye  
how the other Khalid came to fly



and the Kaliph's curse upon him lit,  
and he must wither under it.  
Too long to tell how great and small  
make answer to the Kaliph's call,  
and Yazid and Muavia vie  
with Amrou, with Abou Obeidah,  
how the companions drew nigh,  
victors at Bedr, and these obeyed a  
general of yesterday, of to-day  
if the Kaliph's voice had said : ' Obey.'  
But wherefore rise they in their might,  
the flowers of the faithful, whom to fight  
is need of all this blood so blue?—  
Sirs, do ye mind that I told to you  
how the Prophet to the Emperor writ,  
to Heraclius Emperor of Byzance,  
who crushed beneath his mailed heel  
the Prophet's letter and thought fit  
to dwell in purple ignorance  
of the Prophet and the Faith's appeal?  
Lo, now the point of Islam's lance  
hath pricked the Emperor's Syrian heel,  
and he will stretch his mighty arms  
to do immensities of harms  
unto ' these wild Arabian tribes '  
(for still he speaks in sneers and gibes  
of the power of Islam), but to Hims  
nevertheless he doth proceed,  
together drawing mighty limbs  
' to brush this gad-fly, pluck this weed.'  
And ninety thousand men did lead  
Theoderic the Emperor's brother,  
and George and Caycar each another  
army of well-nigh equal might,  
one on his left one on his right,  
led downward to the stream Yermuk ;

and all God's earth beneath them shook,  
and shook the minds of Islam's chiefs  
as by the stream on the plain these took  
position, and Amrou spake and said :  
' O brother generals let us wed  
our tiny forces till reliefs  
reach us from Mecca and let caution  
be unto each of us for portion.'  
Thus spake that crafty well-rubbed tree  
Amrou and Islam drew together  
and the Romans faced them on the bank  
of the Yermuk on the mighty plain  
Wacusa hight, and there on three  
sides is there nought but precipice,  
and on the fourth the tearing river  
deep in the bosom of Syria sank  
carving thereout a sheer ravine,  
flowing precipitous banks between ;  
but by a narrow neck to gain  
the road is possible. This was seen  
of Amrou and across the stream  
Islam he led and now they gleam,  
jewels of Islam, on the plain  
hard by Wacusa and the neck  
and the road they block and thus they check  
all issue for the Roman host.  
But crafty and wise though Amrou be,  
yet doth he lack that falconry  
which with a swoop more swift than sight  
strieth the quarry and strieth right.  
Therefore full many a day we lost  
and Roman valour sometimes crossed  
the narrow neck but again withdrew,  
and scarce a meal the vultures knew  
hovering in thousands over the plain  
though all their hovering was not vain.

For when the Kaliph read the letter  
of Amrou, and Abou Obeidah :  
quoth he : ‘ Perdie ! no man is staidier,  
nor worthier than Abou Obeidah ;  
than Amrou’s wit there is no better  
between Fostât and Nineveh,  
yet have I now the certainty  
that though I sent them all they ask—  
emptied Arabia as a cask  
of human vintage to give power  
unto their arm, an evil hour  
were that for Islam for they lack  
the genius of the great attack.  
And in all Islam is but one  
whose sword once thrown into the scale  
outweighs the chance of schemes that fail,  
whose doing is the Lord’s will done—  
Khalid, the very sword of God.’  
Therefore to Khalid writ he straight :  
‘ Hail ! all hail ! thou Lion of Islam :  
with thee well-pleased, ill-pleased I am.  
Behold I know the path thou hast trod  
in pious disobedience  
from Hira even unto the gate  
of the Holy City—but get thee hence  
even unto Syria where forlorn  
the faithful meet the Emperor’s scorn,  
and scarce his heavy heel withstand  
down trampling all the Syrian land.  
Forward ! and take of the troops that are  
at thy command the moiety ;  
Forward ! O Khalid, and fulfil  
full measure of the Lord his will  
unto mankind and the sins of flesh  
shall not thy valiant soul enmesh.’  
Thus sent the Kaliph vinegar

mingled with honey unto Khalid,  
and the flower of his army straight he rallied  
even as the Kaliph's letter bid.

But brave Mothanna spake : ' With me  
O Khalid leave one flowery half  
of Islam's chivalry, lest slip  
all Persia from Mothanna's grip,  
for now thou leavest but the chaff.'  
Thus as he spake Mothanna pointed  
where curled and perfumed and anointed  
with unguents of the Persian nard  
crowded round Khalid for his guard  
the flower of Islam's chivalry,  
while on the outskirts of the plain  
stood those of lesser valiancy,  
of lesser birth, and strength and brain.  
So Khalid gave unto Mothanna  
one flowery half to hold the banner  
of Islam in the east on high  
—ten thousand men or very nigh—  
and with like number forth fared he  
over the plains of Araby,  
over that red and sandy sea  
which hath for name Nefud and came  
unto the place of Coracar,  
which having plundered, for it lay  
on the Syrian border, half a day  
he halted and for councillor  
unto his tent a Bedouin came,  
well versed in desert lore and : ' Say  
O Bedouin, O desert-haunter,  
knowst thou a track whereby I may  
coming to Tadmor thus surprise  
mine enemy who at Bostra lies ?'  
' O Sword of God ! O danger-daunter !  
such track I know, but I have met

the bones of many a cavalier  
glistening along the waterless drear  
extension of its level line.

But for an army ! never yet  
hath any but a courser fine  
galloped with reckless cavalier  
along its soft and sandy face :—  
nay better far to die in war  
than in such sandy soft embrace.'

Quoth Khalid : ' Bedouin, thou hast shewed  
unto me just the fitting road.'

And when they cried to him : ' Beware  
O Khalid overmuch to dare ;  
five days across a waterless waste  
to move an army ! ' ' Perilous  
is nought to him who hath for aid  
Allah in heaven and high resolve,'  
quoth Khalid. And the Bedouin : ' Best  
if we fare forth, to take with us  
five thousand camels, first having made  
them thirst, then drink, then drink again,  
then bind their ear and slit their lip,  
that thus their tongue may not revolve,  
nor water from their stomach slip.'

And forth they fared and faring slayed  
at every stage of camels ten  
for every troop of an hundred men,  
and of the water but one draught  
by every man each day was quaffed.  
And with the fifth day now hath end  
their water, but the sands extend  
quite smooth between the sandy hills  
where should have been the bramble-tree,  
mark of the well-spring. Terror fills  
the soul and body of the guide  
as he casts in vain from side to side.

At length he cries : ' Come search with me,  
search for the root of the bramble-tree,  
which if we find not, we are lost.'

Ah ! then ten thousand sandals crossed  
and crossed the sands, ten thousand eyes  
glared on the blank equalities  
of softly falling silent sand,  
stirred it full many a strenuous hand,  
seeking the root, and Khalid prayed  
unto the Lord to be for aid.

Suddenly one that delved found,  
deep hidden in a sandy mound  
the bramble root and : ' Great the Lord !'  
hoarsely they cried, and running bored  
deep in the ground with spear for spade,  
and the up-bubbling spring they found.

And first they drank and next they prayed.  
And with the first of the morn they fell  
on Tadmor stricken with amaze,  
then by the Hauran and the ways  
of Adzarat doth Khalid pass  
even to the Yermuk, where he joins  
his strength unto the straining loins  
of Islam—and his conquering spell  
also upon the Roman fell.

But not at the first victorious was  
the sword of God for five they are  
—Amrou, Muavia, Yazd, Obeidah,  
and Khalid fifth—and wears away  
a month in many-voiced delay.

But Khalid watched and Khalid saw  
the stirring of the God of war  
in the Roman tents on Yermuk's plain,  
and to his fellows spake : ' To gain  
the victory now, supreme command  
must dwell within a single hand,

for look ye, sirs, the field hath changed  
 since Abou Bekr in four arranged  
 the order of battle ; four no more  
 are the Roman armies, but united  
 they joy to see us thus divided ;  
 and by the rumour humming now  
 within mine ear they do prepare  
 their onslaught, and I see not how  
 with arms divided we shall e'er  
 face to their Roman faces break  
 their unity. Therefore let us take  
 supreme command, each for a day  
 alternate, and if so ye will  
 I shall the first command fulfil,  
 Amrou the second, and each one  
 in order till the war be done !'  
 ' Let it be even as thou dost say,  
 O conqueror Khalid,' answered they,  
 ' be thou our general this day,  
 Amrou the morrow, and each one  
 alternate till the war be done.'  
 Thus with soft words did he enveigle  
 those captains four, but once gained o'er  
 they were to him as hawk to eagle.  
 And forty battalions now he made  
 of a thousand each, ' for thus,' he said,  
 ' shall our petty army wide outspread  
 bulk to the Roman twice as great ;'  
 and twenty thousand men did stand  
 for centre in Obeidah's hand,  
 ten thousand on the right with Yazid  
 and with ten thousand Amrou tarried  
 upon the left. And forth they come  
 and as a swarm of bees they hum,  
 mounted in glittering panoply,  
 the Roman warriors, and they seem



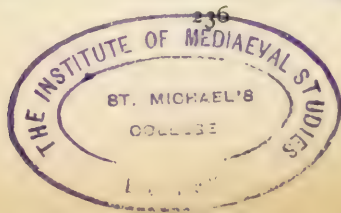
innumerable as they gleam  
moving on Islam, and one said  
who stood by Khalid : ' Lord ! how few  
the faithful.'—Khalid : ' Peace ! poltroon,  
bleared is the blinking of thy view ;  
if but to count aright thou knewest,  
how few the Romans, but the boon  
to count aright is given to fewest :  
for know ! by the Lord's will numbers gain,  
by the Lord's will do numbers wane.  
By Allah ! had I under me  
my steed Zuleika, I would see  
doubled the Roman armament  
and laugh for mighty great content '  
(Zuleika's hoofs were worn away  
passing Irac and Araby).  
He spake, and as a surging sea  
the Roman army frothed and bubbled,  
drew back and came again redoubled ;  
and ' Charge ! and drive them back for me,  
Amrou and Ikrima,' cries Khalid.  
Even as he speaks in dusty weed,  
with eyes of fire and features pallid  
gallops a messenger with screech  
come from Medina, and they crowd  
to know the news and : ' All is well,  
he cometh hither but to tell  
that aid from Araby is nigh,'  
speaks Khalid forth both clear and loud.  
But in his ear the messenger  
whispers a word and doth deliver  
a letter which right speedily  
reading drops Khalid in his quiver.  
' And, see that close thou followest me,  
even at my side and talk with none  
till I give thee leave '—thus Khalid speaks



unto the messenger as he rides  
where the first wave of battle breaks.  
Now forward faring gallopeth one  
towards Khalid, and his horse's sides  
are cloth of gold, and camlet fine  
and vair and true vermillion  
shew where the polished steely line  
of his armour ends, and Khalid cries :  
' By Allah ! now this Roman dies  
even by my hand as Hormuz died  
and twenty others who defied  
Khalid to combat. Get ye back  
and see that none of ye attack  
as I fall on him '—and battle stays  
to watch the issue, but amaze  
now upon all their faces plays :  
for : ' I am George, the cavalier,'  
cries unto Khalid drawing near :  
' George, general of a great division—  
behold the warriors following me—  
but I will join me unto ye  
for the creed of Christ is for derision  
unto me since the wondrous vision  
of Islam and its Paradise,  
of Al Koran, of Gabriel  
and of the blessed turban green  
of the Prophet as I met his eyes,  
and thus he spake : " O George, to dwell  
in Islam's Paradise or in hell  
is for thee to choose, for thee to lose  
on the morrow as thou shalt have been  
with Khalid and the powers of light,  
with the Emperor and the powers of night ;  
for, George, I tell thee, tell thee true  
that on the morrow thou must die  
whether thou fightest for God on high

or for idolatry." In my view  
 he mounted upon Alborak  
 and the stars made flash in the skyey track.  
 "Be wise," he cried ; "be wise, adieu."  
 Thus unto me did the Prophet speak  
 not in the Arabic but in Greek.'  
 'Blest be the Prophet of the Lord,'  
 cried Khalid ; 'George, thy Roman sword  
 steeped in the Roman's gore shall be  
 for all of Islam unto thee,  
 since by the Prophet's mouth they must  
 this very day be turned to dust.'  
 Thus Khalid spake and : 'Abide with me  
 the little space thou hast to live,  
 O George,' said he, 'for I shall give  
 a splendid passing unto thee.'  
 Now when the Romans saw their chief  
 gallop towards Khalid, their belief  
 was even as Islam's that he willed  
 alone with Khalid combating  
 and over Khalid triumphing  
 to win renown, or smitten down,  
 for Christ to die in Paynim field.  
 But when they saw that George did ride  
 with Khalid : 'Lo ! his arms are tied !  
 Prisoner is George !' the Roman cried ;  
 'yon caitiff Khalid hath defied  
 the courtesy of war,' thus shouted  
 the ireful Roman, thus he flouted  
 Islam, and Khalid's valour doubted !  
 And now with pomp of spear and lance  
 gallops the chivalry of Byzance  
 on Islam, and its furious blows  
 break Islam's line and Islam knows  
 for the nonce confusion, but Ikrima  
 crieth : 'Shall I who dared defy

the Prophet in days of ignorance  
turn now and flee before Byzance ?  
To me, my friends, to me, Dhirar !  
come join the covenant of death !'  
Four hundred breathe assentient breath ;  
they charge and the columns following George  
waver and turn, but now they burn,  
faithful and infidel, and urge  
one side and other frantic strife ;  
and maid of Islam even and wife  
join in the battle and these gave  
and gat the death, as bright, as brave  
as the men of Islam—radiant eyes  
all made for lovely ecstasies,  
see with war's lightings how they gleam.  
Thus fought they and the dust like steam  
rose all about them that the sun  
loomed yellow through the clouds of dust,  
and Khalid watched until begun  
was a rift between their horse and foot,  
and in this rift his centre thrust,  
cleft as a wedge the oak-tree's root  
their foot and horse, and lo the chasm  
Yacusa yawns behind the horse,  
and charging with white terror's spasm  
thunderously these take their course  
back upon Islam with the force  
of torrent dammed. Then : 'Stand aside :  
give them free passage,' Khalid cried.  
Headlong those horsemen gallop by  
free to the open, nor will try  
the panic chance of arms again  
for ever on Yacusa's plain.  
To the right and the left then Islam turns  
and to the chasm Islam spurns  
the Roman footmen and they fall



even as an overtoppling wall  
into Yacusa's gaping jaws,  
an hundred thousand, and the chained  
drag down the free to die with them,  
and the Roman general Ficar draws  
his toga round him and its hem  
with heart-wrung tears of blood is stained.  
And on the morrow nought remained  
upon the plain, save Islam only,  
and to Theoderic's royal tent  
Khalid with step accustomed went  
and mourned and worshipped long and lonely.  
And first for George he mourned and prayed  
who in the thickest fight was slain  
toward the evening, and he died  
martyr of Islam, though he said  
but once his prayer right hastily,  
and fought, but never prayed again.  
And Ikrima and his hero son  
and well-nigh all the brave four hundred  
must Khalid mourn, and Khalid wondered  
Dhirar to see alive, for he  
with wounds like crimson blossoms shone.  
And having mourned and having said  
the prayer for friends and heroes dead,  
called the four generals by their name  
Khalid, and to the tent they came.  
'And, sirs,' said he, 'the victory  
with the arms of Islam is to-day,  
for the Lord's will hath Islam done ;  
and the God of Islam is but One,  
and the Prophet of Islam is but one,  
but when he died his power came  
to Abou Bekr to hold the same ;  
but, sirs, now Abou Bekr is dead,  
and Omar ruleth in his stead ;

behold the order Omar sendeth  
wherewith my captaincy he endeth,  
and Abou Obeidah for Ameer  
in Syria nameth Omar here.'  
Therewith the letter open wide  
laid Khalid, and the generals cried :  
' O Khalid, take and keep our thanks  
in this thy victory, for our ranks  
more by the fame of Khalid grew  
than if the floating sand-grains blew  
together, and a world of jinns  
had fought for Islam.' 'Mighty prince,'  
Obeidah cried : 'I pray of thee,  
since thou hast Sword of God for name,  
be thou yet Sword of God for me,  
give me thy counsel lest I slip,  
lest at this last the Roman strip  
thy robe of victory from Islam,  
seeing how slight a thing I am  
by thee, O Khalid.' And Khalid said :  
'Never shall Islam ask in vain  
the best of Khalid's arm and brain.'  
Thus Khalid served magnanimous  
under Obeidah, and they stayed  
awhile upon Wacusa's plain,  
tending the wounded, burying dead,  
and of the opulence of spoil  
counting to each his golden gain.  
Bright is the land of Gilead  
and rich in wheat her billowy soil,  
and oak and olive give their shade,  
and in the myrtle groves the dove  
tells to the brooks the tale of love,  
new with the gay green carpeting,  
the flowery carpeting of spring.  
Such was the picture Khalid saw

spread out his eagle eye before ;  
but little did he gaze thereon,  
nor gazed on Lebanon nor Hermon.  
For Syria and her holy places  
must fall to Islam when the queen  
of the world's cities falls to her.  
Thus spake he, and the listening faces  
of Obeidah, Amrou, and the rest  
knew that Damascus was that queen,  
and that since Khalid coveted her  
for Islam his desire was best.  
And Obeidah bowed to the behest  
of the great Khalid, and they rose,  
and soon the might of Islam goes  
skirting those green and billowy spaces  
of Gilead, over Hermon tops,  
and lo ! the sea of Galilee  
glitters beyond, and Khalid drops  
down from the very hills we see  
shine to the south, but Heraclius  
knew also that if now Damascus  
fell to the Arabs, at an end  
was the Roman rule in Syria.  
Therefore a thousand archers bend  
their bows, a thousand slaves attend  
the Roman archers as they wait  
upon the walls above each gate.  
And nigh two hundred days slip by,  
and weary the warriors of Islam are  
sitting before Damascus' walls,  
whose feet are lost in sands of time,  
whose eldest stones are next sublime  
to those of Islam's Kaaba.  
Yea, that for me were long to tell,  
how Khalid came to know the night  
that Nastus chose to celebrate

with cheer of wine and meat and cate  
 the birth of a son, and darkness fell ;  
 and : ' Now,' said Khalid, ' all is well,  
 for those that feast think not to fight.  
 Ha ! Madzur ! Ha ! my Cacao !  
 flowers of Islam, what say ye  
 to an escalade ? Right pleasantly  
 we will proceed, and first to float  
 on these swelled skins across the moat,  
 and then to scale yon opposite wall,  
 which is more high more low than all,  
 for the highest wall is ever lowest,  
 since those that guard are ever slowest  
 aught of misfortune to await,  
 when with high walls they have bribèd fate.'  
 And Cacao laughed and eke Madzur,  
 and : ' Of us as of old thou mayest be sure,  
 O Khalid, who have helped thee harry  
 the dovecot of the Chosroës.'  
 ' Ha ! that is well,' laughed Khalid back,  
 ' but see ye, in this night attack  
 all is surprise, for we must carry  
 surprise not only to the Roman,  
 but also to his Arab foeman.'  
 ' How so ?' said Madzur. ' Amrou is  
 at the gate Tuma. Shorahbil  
 at the gate Farâdis,' answered Khalid,  
 ' and worst of all Abou Obeidah  
 at the gate Jabia ; to fulfil  
 my purpose forth we must have sallied  
 and gained *our* gate from the inner side,  
 then first the cry of Allah Akbar !  
 shall rouse the slumber of Obeidah ;  
 (but never can it be denied,  
 and oft hath been in battle tried  
 the courage of Abou Obeidah



our general), but since each may choose  
or chance to spy a breach, to lose  
the chance of war by calling those  
whose weight would sink my careful plan  
deep in the moat, that will I not.  
But if ye will, O Cacao,  
and thou Madzur, quite ready are  
ladders and ropes of clinging nooses  
and fourscore hands of those who wot  
that Khalid tries but what he can,  
and ventures but when Khalid chooses.  
Come, do ye will to join the feast  
that Nastus makes this night? The fare  
is meagre but the trophies rare,  
and when we come to feast with him  
methinks the Roman chief will share  
what most he hath of rich and rare !'  
Thus laughed these warriors light of heart,  
and the sentry on the rampart dim  
drowsily nods as now they start,  
phantoms of warriors floating o'er  
that misty moat, a reckless score.  
See ! they are landed and they creep  
like tigers to the wall and throw  
their nooses upwards, and they keep  
their hold and upward, up they go.  
Now they are mounted ! which was first,  
Madzur or Cacao ? none can tell,  
and least of all the sentinel  
as from his mouth the blood doth burst,  
and dead he falls, and very soon  
his fellows join that drowsy loon.  
Now to the gate, and blow upon blow  
must bolt and bar and rivet know.  
Behold ! 'tis open and 'Allah Akbar !'  
they shout and the gate wide open throw.



And 'Allah Akbar !' near and far  
 echoeth loud and in they flow,  
 those swords of Araby that drave  
 the Persian to Euphrates' wave.  
 Forward they fight, and the street called Straight  
 they block with corpses, and the narrow  
 alleys and vestibules and porches  
 gleam red with blood and blazing torches;  
 but as the flight of the well-winged arrow  
 Khalid Madzur and Cacao  
 and the score that scaled the walls before  
 seek where the chiefs and Nastus are,  
 and on the way the torches play,  
 and groans of men and shrieks of women  
 unto their ears like music come,  
 for when the war-god rageth then  
 are gentleness and pity dumb.  
 But when they win the palace gate  
 meets them no vain, no weak parade  
 of revellers driven forth to die,  
 but at the head of a cavalcade  
 Obeidah's steed is caracolling  
 and 'twixt the corpses daintily  
 he steps nor ever asks controlling  
 from the hand of Abou Obeidah.  
 And Khalid crieth : ' By Allah say  
 how comest thou here ? ' ' By the western gate,  
 which lieth open, and thou must stay  
 the sack, for signed and sealed are  
 the terms of yielding.' ' By the beard  
 of the Prophet fairly stormed and carried  
 is Damascus,' furious crieth Khalid :  
 ' what boots it that the Roman feared  
 the sword of God when the eastern gate  
 was won, thus yielding all too late ?  
 Those that have nothing left to yield

can make no terms, and mere chicane  
as this of Nastus cannot shield  
his town nor townsmen.' 'But, in vain  
thou pleadst for blood for signed and sealed  
is the surrender, half their wealth  
is ours and half their wealth is theirs  
and all their lives Obeidah spares  
which yet are living : therefore stay  
the swords of thy followers, Khalid :—stealth  
was thine as theirs and mercy wins  
her battle when 'tis ours to slay  
and none resist us, brighter jewel  
than ever shone in crown of prince,  
in the hilt gleams mercy, the more cruel  
in the battle's heat the warrior's blade.'  
Thus Obeidah spake and Khalid stayed  
his warriors and the Eye of the East,  
unto the Eden of Islam changeth  
and Islam over Syria rangeth  
even as the lion, though a while  
Heraclius striveth yet at Fihl,  
where Khalid like the tawny beast  
leadeth the van and bright Dhirar  
the plunging, springing, hoofs of war,  
and in the quaking deep morass  
Byzance an evil ending has.  
Too long to tell of Theodore  
smitten on hip and thigh as he  
thought to win back Damascus city—  
Khalid before, Yazid behind,  
like wheaten ear that millstones grind—  
and how Obeidah scudding o'er  
the plain on Hims, threw out his net  
to snare the fleeing Emperor  
yet gat him not, and how he set  
the siege of Hims and weeks belated

the promised succour Hims awaited,  
nor yielded till the Lord did shake  
and breached the walls with the Lord's earthquake.  
Northward we pass and Laodicea  
first of full many towns doth rear  
ramparts defiant—Laodicea  
laughs as we raise the siege and night  
falleth as Islam slips from sight—  
open her gates will Laodicea  
safely since nought is left to fear—  
swift as the dash of the clawed invader  
swoops back the squadron of Obeidah,  
open or shut, O Laodicea,  
ours are thy gates full many a year.  
Northward we win and at Kinnisrin  
wreaks Khalid havock and Aleppo  
likewise the sword of God must know.  
Queen of the East is Antioch,  
and here at the least those walls of rock  
mile upon mile that leap ravine,  
that climb the mountains to embrace  
this queen of cities will brave the shock  
of the arms of Islam—here the Roman  
will prove his lineage, drive disgrace  
from his ancient name and face his foeman.  
Nay, but Heraclius fast is flying,  
nay, but the best of their defying  
is on the plain without the town,  
and as the spring of the desert lion  
is the spring of Islam and those flee  
back to the city that scathless be,  
and as the serpent's coil environ  
the Queen of the East the coils of Islam.  
Soon from her jewelled hands the sword  
fell and for mercy she implored.  
Thus upon Syria came the arm

of the Lord and further and further fled  
the Emperor till at length he stood  
on the last hill of his westering  
whence yet he might see anything  
of Syria's sun-lit plain and wood.  
And bowed was the Emperor's head  
as for the last time eastward he  
gazed on his vanishing empery,  
and stretching towards her with his hand :  
' Peace be unto thee, Holy Land,  
that bearest in thy bosom his bone  
who doth for all men's sins atone ;  
peace be unto thee, and farewell,  
farewell, I say, for now not ever  
in all the blossoming of the years  
shall Roman tread thy soil for ever,  
saving with trembling and with tears  
until on earth shall walk the beast  
that moveth horned from the east.'  
Thus spake Heraclius as he passed  
pale to Byzance, but in the dust  
him seemed that somewhat whitening gleamed  
by the wayside as at the last  
Syria he fled since fly he must.  
And ten years doing rolled away  
and he stood a pilgrim by the way,  
he saw the shreds of the Prophet's screed  
which rending he had scorned to read,  
again he saw the endless line  
of those that bare the cross divine,  
and in the distance gleamed the city  
which hath for name Jerusalem.  
Ten years had flown and the memory came  
back on Heraclius as a mirage,  
and bending down he wept for pity  
and the tears upon his wrinkled visage

were tears of love and loss and shame.  
But here would I sow ere the wings of time  
shall fan them away such seeds of rhyme  
as in flowers of memory upspringing  
within the garden of your minds  
shall far outvie the sower's flinging  
of little grains on rich deep ground.  
Where can the word, the speech be found  
to tell of how Jerusalem  
from the Christian unto Islam came?  
Jerusalem whose very name  
the eye of reverence well-nigh blinds?  
Sacred for us as for ye the place  
where Jacob lay, and the rock his pillow,  
whence mounting upon Alborak  
the Prophet sped by the starry track  
yet beareth the ineffable trace  
of the Prophet's foot upon her face,  
for soft for very joyance grew  
the rocky pillow when she knew  
that the Prophet of God upon her stood.  
First Kibla of Islam, aye toward her  
turnèd the Prophet at the prayer,  
and with him all the faithful turned  
and toward Jerusalem they yearned;  
till at Medina on a day  
turned he toward Mecca, and as a wood  
when the south becomes the northern breeze  
turn all the faithful as the trees  
will bend their leafage, and we pray  
towards Mecca turnèd still to-day.  
But how Jerusalem came to fall,  
this tell I not, how Artabûn  
fleeing from Amrou flees to hide  
his shame in the reeds by Nilus' side,  
and how the Patriarch Sophronius

craveth of Amrou for a boon  
that he the Kaliph's self may call  
even from Medina to receive  
the keys of the city, and even thus  
did Omar, and the first to leave  
of all the Kaliphs Araby  
was Omar and in habit lowly  
moved Omar toward the city holy.  
But Amrou, Yazid, and Obeidah,  
and Khalid decked in raiment golden,  
saddle and bridle thick with gem,  
waited without Jerusalem  
the coming of the great commander.  
But Omar when he had beholden  
their splendour, blushed, and stooping down  
took gravel in his hand and threw  
towards them and : 'Avaunt !' he cried,  
tricked out like Satraps to the view.  
'Lo, not a score of years hath fled  
since the Prophet passed and here defied  
is the rigour of Islam !' And they said :  
'O Commander of the Faithful, see,  
these be but toys ; behold beneath  
concealèd is our valour's sheath !'  
And gold and jewels thrust aside,  
they shewed their steely panoply.  
Yet Omar frowned and still the frown  
was round his brow as kneeling down  
Sophronius at the city's gate  
implores his pity who is more great  
than Emperor, than Chosroës,  
than any monarch that doth tread  
the level earth, and lo, 'tis fled  
the frown and : 'Fear ye not at all,  
O Christians, for to Islam is  
Jerusalem the holiest city

even after Mecca, and our pity  
is to our reverence but the call  
which now I answer : ye shall be  
enrolled among the favoured cities,  
and light the tribute unto ye,  
and every church and every shrine  
which unto ye is for divine  
untouched of Islam these shall be  
inalienable unto ye.'

And the Patriarch stooped and kissed again  
stirrup and hand that held the rein,  
craved of the Kaliph that he would deign  
perambulate the sacred town.

And now hath Omar mounted down  
and with the Patriarch proceeding  
courteously followeth his leading  
from holy place to holy place,  
and courteously giveth heeding  
to the Patriarch whose eye and face  
shine for pure joy that all his pleading  
findeth with mighty Omar grace.

Forward they fare and now they stand  
within the church that Constantine  
builded, and lo the hour of prayer  
is come, and : 'Dost thou here command  
that thy prayer carpet be outspread ?'  
asketh a follower, but benign  
makes answer Omar : 'Better 'twere  
without to spread it, for if I pray  
within the church then is it lost  
unto the Christians from this day,  
for the Faithful will rise up to thrust  
the Christian forth, since never must  
the worship of the One God mingle  
with many Gods, for God is single,  
and since the only God is One



only to Him is worship done.'  
Thus Omar speaks unto Sophronius  
in courtesy, but his voice sonorous  
doth roll along the church's wall,  
shaking the pictures that they fall,  
and the images idolatrous  
in twain by Omar's words are cloven,  
as Omar goeth forth to pray.  
And having prayed as is behoven,  
forward they fare and coming where  
is the pillow of Jacob and the place  
whence mounted upon Alborak  
the Prophet passed by the starry track,  
behold with bramble, weed, and thorn  
quite hidden is the footprint glorious.  
And the Kaliph when he sees forlorn  
this holy place, doth bend him down,  
and labouring with hands august  
cleareth the weed and briar and dust,  
(and eke Sophronius standing by  
must cross himself for piety).  
And having cleared the sacred rock :  
'Here,' said he, 'is foundation stone  
for the mosque which Islam shall upraise,  
where those to come shall only praise  
the God of Islam.' As he spake  
behold the sun of even brake  
her golden arrows round the head  
of giant Omar and they tread,  
Kaliph and hoary Patriarch,  
returning steps and night is fair,  
for the moon and the stars of heaven shine,  
as Omar goeth forth again  
unto his tent upon the plain ;  
and followeth him the glittering line  
of captains and the Patriarch



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bids them farewell and even : Hark !  
God speed ! and Islam everywhere  
triumphs, and though so great, so strong,  
yet to the Christian doth no wrong.

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Thus with the dip of the wing of swallow  
rippling the river of history  
have I told of Syria and would follow  
an so ye will its sumptuous curve  
back to the Persian empery ;  
but for a moment I would swerve  
from the main stream and Khalid follow,  
and in his waning and his fall  
see how the great even as the small  
are but as bubbles, he who drave  
the Persian to Euphrates' wave  
and down Yacusa's chasm hurled  
the Emperor and the western world,  
but as the best of many slaves  
whose back shall feel his master's staves.  
For when victorious from Iyadh  
Khalid returned, great store he had  
of gold and gems and rich apparel,  
which giving thus his friends made glad.  
But Omar frowned and thought not well ;  
but when he knew that Khalid once  
at Amida brake the Prophet's rule,  
pouring within a marble pool  
red waves of wine and bathed therein,  
to fury his displeasure runs.  
And to Obeidah writeth he :  
and Obeidah reads and tears do win  
their courses down his rugged face—  
ordered his comrade to disgrace—  
but unto Khalid presently  
he writeth and from Kinnisrin

journeyeth Khalid unto Hims.  
And when he cometh, an assembly  
ordereth Obeidah in the mosque,  
and in the pulpit standeth he  
and Khalid in the centre gleams  
like oak that ivy growths imbosk.  
'Answer me, Khalid,' speaks Bilal,  
'whence came to thee that vast largesse  
which all abroad the Syrian land  
floweth like water from thy hand?'  
But Khalid answereth not at all,  
astounded even unto dumbness.  
Stands Bilal forth, and : 'Thus and thus  
the Commander of the Faithful saith,  
and he ordaineth law to us,'  
crieth Bilal, and he unwinds  
the kerchief from the head of Khalid  
and with the same his hands he binds  
and from his head the helmet taketh.  
Now as a thief grown sudden pallid,  
see where the mighty captain stands !  
Now no man dareth breathe a breath.  
Again that thunderous voice demands  
the same and Khalid speaks at last.  
And : ' Mine to give was all the gold,'  
answereth he, and Bilal fast  
loosens the kerchief from his hands  
and again around the helmet binds,  
and places on the head of Khalid.  
'Champion of Islam still we hold  
thee, Khalid, driving from our minds  
those lies thine enemies devise,'  
crieth Bilal, whose clangorous voice  
summoned the Prophet's self to prayer ;  
and all the faithful now rejoice—  
yea, joy is written broad and fair

upon all faces—all save one—  
Obeidah dwelleth yet in gloom ;  
for lo, another in the room  
of Khalid now at Kinnisrin  
must rule, yet hardly can be done  
the duty lest he should offend  
Khalid the hero, comrade, friend,  
whose government is as a pin  
unto the worlds his sword hath won  
for Islam, and he knoweth well  
that Omar's hate doth masquerade  
in robes of the cloth of justice made.  
Therefore beside him for a spell  
he craveth Khalid's company,  
nor a word of his disgrace doth tell,  
save by his silent sympathy,  
and Omar when he sees the task  
more than the mightiest prince may ask  
of sworn allegiance—(to abase  
an hero ever draws disgrace  
only on the doer)—presently  
ordereth Khalid to Medina.  
Khalid obeyeth the behest,  
and standing face to Omar's face :  
' Never, methinks, in the world hath been a  
prince to his faithful servant meaner.  
Behold, I have given thee the West,  
Behold, I have given thee the East,  
and now thou criest : " Methinks were cleaner  
the hands of Khalid if for nought  
Persia and Syria he brought  
beneath my sway "—but even the least  
of all thy slaves, the very beast  
that grindeth out thy corn for thee,  
I swear that they have had their part  
in what they wrought with willing heart.

Behold ! now eighty thousand pieces  
gained I when Abou Bekr reigned,  
and twenty thousand came to me  
since thou wast Kaliph over Islam  
(and the Lord He giveth what He pleases).  
Take now the twenty thousand pieces,  
but taking know (and this I swear  
by the beard of the Prophet) that this arm  
hath won for Islam gold enow  
to build Medina all in gold,  
and but for me would Islam bow  
to Emperor and to Chosroës.’  
Thus unto Omar Khalid told  
the very truth, his sword made bare  
for the last time before the Lord—  
yet Omar took those well-won pieces  
and writ unto the provinces  
that the great Khalid ne’er again  
should fight for Islam, never reign  
in any government again,  
but for no tyranny nor fraud  
is Khalid thus disgeneralled,  
unsworded : ‘Nay !’ (the Kaliph writ),  
‘this have I done lest quite enthralled  
to the arm of the flesh the people call  
only on Khalid and forget  
to call on Allah !’ Islam yet  
sneereth at Omar that he writ  
such letter as a slave should write  
that hopes to hide his venomd spite.  
Thus Khalid fell and back to Hims,  
grown sudden old and worn and bent,  
the sheath of the sword of Allah went  
Right long the road and weary seems  
to him who once had flitted over  
Irac and Araby, a rover  
weariless as the desert wind.

But now are man and fate unkind  
and soon that eagle in his eyes  
flies home to roost, and Khalid lies  
upon his couch as one that dies.  
And now he shews them wound and scar  
heroic from the fangs of war :  
' And as an aged camel I,  
even Khalid, lay me down to die  
forsaken underneath the sky.'  
Then turneth Khalid to the wall  
his face and mighty Khalid passes,  
and Islam heedeth not at all.  
Yea, as a face in a moving glass is  
the face of earthly fame and glory—  
gone and the image scarce was thrown,—  
yea, thus and thus is Khalid's story  
who died disgraced, disgrudoned, lone,  
Saviour of Islam.

But to tell  
of Persia and the bloody fields  
fought ere the Persian lion yields,  
of the Battle of the Bridge where fell  
our leader torn and trampled under  
the elephant's hoofs, of the Persian banner  
of panther's skins, a jewelled wonder  
eight cubits broad, twelve cubits long,  
here as a talisman unfurled,  
of the elephants on Islam hurled,  
how Islam fled and brave Mothanna  
kept the bridge free—would weigh them down  
these skimming dipping wings of song.  
And how Mothanna won renown  
at Boweib, battle of the Tens,  
where dark before our cause regains  
all that was lost—this tell I not—  
an hundred thousand skulls remain

for sign thereof upon the plain.  
But how the Persian Yezdegird  
upon the throne of Chosroës sat,  
a comely youth, and youthful fire  
passed from his veins to his old empire—  
this asks the telling, well I wot—  
for all the Persians when they heard  
that the bright bird, that Yezdegird  
of blood all blue, of blood all royal  
reigned over them, grew sudden loyal—  
noble and villain joyed thereat,  
and to the capital Madain  
they flocked and flocked and flocked amain.  
Which when he knew : ‘ I swear by the Lord,’  
cries Omar, ‘ that our Prince’s sword  
shall smite the Persian Princes down.’  
And though Mothanna’s young renown  
blazed upon Islam, for commander  
chose they the Ravening Lion Sad  
the son of Malik, since Mothanna  
being but a Bedouin chieftain had  
nought of nobility to command  
the noblest names in all the land,—  
for Prince and Noble and Companion,  
Poet and Singer—every one  
with aught of strength in name or fame—  
gathered the Kaliph in his hand  
to hurl on Persia. Sad was brave,  
of ancient lineage, and they gave  
to Sad the honour of the blood  
first drawn in Islam, for he stood  
nigh to the Prophet, and ’twas told  
how the Prophet when the field waxed hot  
spake thus to Sad and to none other  
like discourse ever deigned to hold :  
‘ Shoot ! by my father and my mother !

shoot thou, O Sad !' Thus Islam got  
both name and fame and hardihood  
in Sad for chief, and soon we stood  
with thirty thousand men upon  
the battlefield Kadesia.  
Before us did Euphrates run,  
and to the left came curving round ;  
behind, the desert and the mound  
and trench of Sapor ; on the right  
a swamp impassable :—thus were  
the arms of Islam ranged for fight.  
But as they wait upon the plain  
cometh to Sad from Omar order  
to send an embassy with the word  
of God to new-crowned Yezdegird,  
by Tigris' side, even at Madain ;  
and if he hearken he shall gain  
his country's salvage or prefer  
an he will the tribute ; such they were,  
the terms of Islam. So they choose  
twenty great chiefs whose stalwart growth  
with rank and eke with knowledge goeth,  
and forth these pass upon their way.  
Behold their steeds are champing, stamping  
even at Madain, and the Persians lose  
no sight of Araby's warriors,  
clad in their striped robes of Yemen,  
uncouth yet fearsome : ' Wolves and boars ;  
and o'er their shoulders slung, their bow  
is as the distaff of our women,'  
sneereth the Persian—soon our arrows  
which to such distaff are the spindle  
for flax the lives of Persians know.  
Now they have audience, see them kindle,  
each as he speaks, for each hath part  
in this great embassy and heart



joineth to head as they expose  
unto the youthful Yezdegird  
the faith of Islam and the word  
of the Prophet and : ' Embrace the faith,'  
one after other each one saith,  
' or if thou wiltst not, mayest thou choose  
pay tribute, which if thou refuse,  
then are the days of thy kingdom counted.'  
Thus the Arabs spake, but Yezdegird  
mocked at their speech and thus he taunted  
the flower of Islam's paladin :  
' Nought, ye are nought, O ragged herd,  
barbarian from a naked land,  
that darest Persia's soil to tread,  
but not an armful shall ye win  
save what I give with gracious hand.  
By Ormuz and by Ahriman !  
by Mithra, by the triple head  
of Zarathustra's dragon band,  
came ye not here an embassy,  
this very hour ye all were sped.  
Bring me a clod of earth ' (he cried  
unto his slaves), and a clod they brought,  
and : ' Take,' said he, ' and let he of ye  
that is the greatest bear it forth  
as from my city gates ye ride,  
bound on his back ;' and Asim caught  
the clod of earth and : ' O King henceforth  
shall the sword between us twain decide.  
Yea, we are hungry, yea, we are poor,  
yet ours the truth thou mightest share  
and with thy kingdom dwell secure.  
Thou wiltst it not, but rich and rare  
is the gift thou givest, and we shall bear  
this clod of Persia's soil to those  
whose valour well the meaning knows



of such a gift on such a day.  
 Farewell, O King ; perchance again  
 we meet upon Kadesia's plain.'  
 Therewith they mounted hastily  
 and in a trice were far away.  
 Even as they passed the gate of the city  
 came Rustem, and : ' O King,' said he,  
 ' what speech had the Arab chiefs with thee ?'  
 And straight unfolded Yezdegird  
 all that they said, all he replied  
 and how with insult subtle he  
 had given for gift a Persian clod  
 more worshipful than Islam's god.  
 But Rustem when this speech he heard :  
 ' O King,' quoth he, ' not thou but they  
 are subtle and that clod of earth  
 unto the Arabs may be worth  
 those million million clods of clay  
 that make thine Empire, but maybe  
 rapidly speeding cavaliers  
 may yet meet those ambassadors—  
 have back thy Persian soil for thee.'  
 Thus Rustem, general in chief,  
 spake to his master and the King  
 when the sign he knew, was lost in grief :  
 horses and horsemen light of wing  
 haste after Araby to regain  
 the soil of Persia—all in vain :  
 for Asim never drawing rein,  
 sped onward till Kadesia's plain  
 came looming toward him and before  
 the feet of Sad he cast his burden :  
 ' See what the witling Yezdegird  
 giveth to Araby for guerdon,  
 even his kingdom,' Asim cried,  
 and told their doing word by word,

how each with other they had vied  
of the Faith to speak and the clod of clay  
they gat for all their brave parlèy.  
Even as he spake, the news ran through  
the ranks of the faithful and all men knew  
of the clod of Persia, knew that cast  
was the die of war at this the last  
(for many days had all awaited  
decision of their chief belated).  
And the Persian general Rustem knew  
that war was on him, but there flew  
unto his nightly bed such dreams  
of ghastly face, of ghoulish screams ;  
there haunted him by light of day  
portents so ominous on the way  
from Tigris even unto Euphrates,  
that yielding somewhat unto these  
to Sad he writ when his army lay  
nigh Babylon and armistice  
he craved to treat of terms of peace.  
But unto Rustem Sad sent word :  
' Islam, or Tribute, or the Sword :  
for thee to choose : and three days' grace  
hast thou to ponder.' But there passed  
the first, the second, and the last ;  
and on the fourth crossed Rustem over  
by a dam Euphrates and a place  
on the western bank his henchmen found  
whence he might view the battle-ground  
seated upon his throne of gold.  
An hundred thousand men they were  
that followed him, both chained and free,  
but Islam thirty thousand told.  
And in his palace Yezdegird  
ever the youngest rumour heard,  
for the road was all with ears supplied

and with loud voice those criers cried  
one to another that Madain  
seemed within sound of the battle-plain.  
But Sad did lie in grievous plight,  
nor might his valour join the fight,  
for angry boil and festering blain  
made that he could not stand aright  
nor sit upon his steed for pain,  
but on a litter lay and came  
to the wall of the fortress high Codeïs  
(which by the bank of the river is),  
and to his warriors cried : ' No blame  
can touch your general for this,  
and ye, methinks, will mind the fame  
of the Archer of Islam ; ' and they shouted  
that none of them his valour doubted.  
Then from the rampart exhortation  
made Sad to these and made quotation  
of Al Koran and when he spake  
of the field of Bedr and the angel host  
that fought for Islam, lo, they brake  
into wild ardour for ' decision '  
was the day of Bedr, and the discourse closed  
when Sad commanded none to stir  
' till past was the midday hour of prayer—  
and the sound of the signal shall be " Takbir,"  
" great is the Lord," which I will cry  
from the battlements and ye reply ;  
and at the second Takbir gird  
your weapons on, and at the third  
your steeds make ready, and fourth shall be  
for " Speed ye on the enemy. " "

But the Persian moved when he had heard  
of the four Takbirs sound the third,  
and of the heroes of Islam some  
challenge the Persian—see them come

forth from their fellows each alone,  
pearls from the depths of ocean thrown —  
and forth to meet them, see they ride,  
those peacock's eyes of Persia's pride.  
First met first fall as Amrou's thrust  
bears the proud Selim to the dust,  
whose jewelled girdle, bracelet, rings  
back to the camp great Amrou brings,  
and Ghalib of the tribe Asad  
sings as he charges and is glad :  
' O maiden of the hanging tresses  
whose breast of milk this hand caresses,  
full well thou knowest that this hand  
lays low the enemies of thy land.'  
Singing he falls upon his foe,  
Hormuz, Prince of the Gate, and blow  
answereth blow and clear they ring  
and as a smith doth Asad sing  
that beats an anvil and the chime  
of answering blows is as my rhyme,  
till Hormuz trips, till Hormuz falls,  
exhaurient, bloody, and he calls  
for mercy and by Asad's side  
walketh a captive that did ride  
even now the Persian paragon.  
But beyond all far brighter shone  
the doing of the Thackifite,  
and that his doing may have light,  
first of the scoffers I must tell  
who though they knew the truth full well,  
yet sneered at Sad and : ' Blain for blain  
giveth an arrow less of pain  
than the blains of Sad,' they laughed, and : ' Many  
widows in Islam will there be  
ere we may gain the victory—  
but widows of Sad will not be any.'

Thus scoffed they and the Thackifite,  
 Abou Majain so sharp did bite,  
 that by the order of Sad with chains  
 they bound him and within the fortress  
 the first of the battle he remains  
 and the lovely Selma hath for wardress  
 (Selma, the widow of Mothanna,  
 wedded by Sad as was the manner  
 of the heroes of Islam)—thus he lies,  
 and though he hath the lovely eyes  
 of Selma whereupon to gaze,  
 as in the dungeon's depths they blaze,  
 yet hath he comfort none but pain,  
 and with a thousand vows and sighs  
 pleadeth for liberty amain.  
 And as he pleadeth Selma aye  
 shaketh her lovely head and : ' Nay,  
 how canst thou ask, when yonder Sad  
 more with thy sneers than with pain is mad.'  
 ' Ah ! lady fair, sweet Selma queen  
 of the greatest chief that hath ever been—  
 (not Sad, Mothanna 'tis I mean)—  
 answer my prayer and hear me swear  
 that if but an hour upon the plain,  
 a warrior free I may career,  
 back unto thy sweet ward again,  
 back unto bolt and bar and chain  
 I will return me safely here  
 if life but live in heart and brain.'  
 Thus speaks Majain and Selma smiles :  
 ' Perfay, Majain, thy speech beguiles  
 more by the memory of my lord  
 Mothanna than by what thou sayest  
 of Selma's beauty or of Sad  
 my spouse, our master much adored '  
 (and here a little laugh she had),

‘but if I loose thee, swear thou stayest  
but an hour of battle and again  
will let me bind thee with this chain.’  
‘I swear, fair Selma, yea, I swear,’  
answers Majain, and now she toys  
with the chain that binds him, and the noise  
of the fight without, of blow and shout  
reaches them faintly, and she saith  
(while on his face he feels her breath  
oasis-sweet): ‘Go forth, Majain,  
for see, I loosen now the chain,  
and since thou lackst a steed, the white  
charger of Sad waits on the right  
hard by the gate and this his ring  
will charm the varlets; see thou bring  
the ring and the charger back with thee,  
and bring thy valiant self to me.  
And on the rampart I will stand  
and watch the deeds that thou shalt do,  
warring upon my Persian foe.’  
Kisseth her once upon the hand  
Majain all burning to regain  
the open air, the ruddy plain,  
and scarce she winneth to her lord  
upon the rampart when: ‘Behold,  
methinks he gallopeth overbold  
right in the Persian jaws, alone,’  
quoth Sad, ‘what cavalier unknown  
wieldeth so well the flashing sword?  
See! he hath scaped him again  
and twice a Persian chief hath slain,  
curving in circles on the plain.  
Now, by my troth, did I not know  
that safe beneath Majain was lying  
I’d swear ’twas he and the steed mine own.’  
(See where the blushes come and go

on Selma's cheeks.) 'My Lord I left  
Majain a moment past,' quoth she,  
'and on his limbs right heavily  
weighed the great chain, and I was glad  
thinking it galled his body so,  
that dared to jeer at thee, O Sad,  
my well-beloved.' Thus the deft  
Selma cajoles her lord and sees  
Majain draw near the castle wall,  
and as the mighty Sad is writing  
orders which written straight he drops  
over the ramparts (and the fighting  
of Islam hangs upon his writing),  
see where Majain the hero stops,  
and as a truant at the call  
of master soon is on his knees  
before fair Selma and the chain  
she bindeth on his limbs again ;  
then with fair finger laughs and chides  
that nigh two hours from her he hides  
among the Persians and : 'I saw  
one Persian Prince and one Prince more  
fall by thy hand and now hath done  
Majain his will, methought, and now  
to Selma comes, but scarce begun  
was then thy doing, and they fell  
before thee as from bridge of hell  
at the judgment day'—and on the brow  
kisseth Majain, then out of reach  
withdraweth Selma and : 'Thy vow  
Majain to me thou hast kept full well.  
Now see ! I make a vow to thee :  
that on the morrow thou art free,  
which if I break, then Sad shall preach  
alone from the rampart whence I fell.  
For gazing in Mothanna's eyes



I learned to see where valour lies,  
and lo it shineth clear in thine.  
And on the day of Islam's need  
that were a piteous thing indeed,  
if for the sake of a word in wine  
Islam should call on thee in vain,  
bound in a dungeon with a chain.'  
Thus Selma speaketh and she hies  
back to her lord, and well she wrought,  
and on the Night of Clangour fought  
again for Islam great Majain.  
But though fair Selma loosed his chain :  
'Yet,' said he, 'ever round my heart  
a chain more strong hath Selma wound  
of radiant eyes, of sweetest sound—  
footfall and speech—and she hath bound  
all with the falling of her hair  
as she bent o'er me—everywhere  
I am in prison, nor would part  
for all the gold of Araby  
with the chain she winded round my heart.'  
Let stand these words for memory  
of Selma and of great Majain,  
and to the Battle, for less long  
were the single combats than my song.  
See now the elephants like castles  
with warriors manned and banners waving  
bear down on Islam and in vain  
the bravest with such monster wrestles ;  
for at the sight the Arab steed  
flies on the wind, nor giveth heed  
to bit nor bridle and the saving  
of Islam now on Asim falls.  
For when our centre breaks they bear  
down on the wings and pound and tear  
with tusk and hoof of ponderous gear

that at the Bridge alike down-trodden  
was Islam never and the plain  
as a marsh with blood and brains is sodden.  
Now of an hero Sad is fain  
and droppeth from his castle walls  
to Asim order that he save  
the day for Islam though he pay  
for price the bravest of his brave.  
Thus writeth Sad and Asim calls  
on the archers of the tribe Temmim,  
and where he leads they will follow him  
and to the rolling castle's close  
Asim with those his archers goes  
and on the corpses piled they stand  
and aiming with unwavering hand  
they pierce the guardians of the beast  
that brings destruction—and released  
from governance these roll away  
like billows when the tempests stay.  
And Islam rallies as the night  
falls on the plain and day the first—  
'Armath'—a doubtful ending hath.  
But with the first of the sun there burst  
on the eyes of Islam joyous sight—  
Cacaa's self from Syria come—  
and of his warriors, Hashim some  
leadeth behind, but Cacaa taketh  
with him a thousand and as breaketh  
the sun upon Kadesia  
so Cacaa with an hundred men  
cantereth lissom o'er the plain,  
and behind him nine hundred are.  
See where he crieth salutation  
to Sad and bringeth exaltation  
to the hearts of the faithful as he speaks  
of the five thousand drawing nigh.

And from his steed he mounts not down,  
but straight for a Persian foe he seeks  
equal in valour and renown.  
Sudden there flashes on his eye  
Dzul Habib, hero of the Bridge,  
that wreaked on Islam dule and ravage.  
'Vengeance!' cries Cacao, and hath mown  
like tallest grass Dzul Habib down.  
Twice fifty strong across the plain  
in companies charge Cacao's men,  
and as they pass the armies by  
greetings to friends, to foes defiance,  
and 'Allah Akbar!' loud they cry.  
'Allah Akbar!' and now reliance  
on the new comers for Islam grows  
as sinks the courage of her foes.  
Cacao leads and Islam throws  
her best upon the Persian front,  
and but for Rustem's name and fame,  
now from the field would Islam hunt  
the lion of Persia, but Persia rallies  
and as the eve of the second day  
falls on the field their families  
mounting from sire to gorgeous sire  
declaim the Arabs and they pray  
to the Lord the giver of victories;  
and the Persian too will keep the fire  
of battle in his veins ablaze,  
and to his Persian idols prays,  
and calls upon his ancestors.  
Thus all the night the lion roars,  
the mighty lion of great wars,  
and a doubtful issue likewise hath  
this second day, the day Aglath.  
And Selma stood by the bed of Sad  
night long and: 'Sir,' she said, 'they cry

aloud their glorious ancestry.'  
And Sad made answer : ' Never bad  
is the fortune of Islam when they call  
their ancestry beneath the stars,  
for they would never wish to shew  
to the souls of those their ancestors  
but glorious doings, splendid scars ;  
let sleep upon mine eyelids fall,  
nor wake me, Selma, save they grow  
less frequent on the air of night,  
those names and deeds of bygone might.'  
Thus answered Sad, and deep he slept  
and watch by his side fair Selma kept,  
and saw the white and trembling dawn  
creep o'er the battlefield forlorn.  
And for a mile between the foes  
thick lay the dead and for a space  
they stayed their arms as the sun arose,  
and the women sought for the loved one's face.  
And the wounded straight beneath the sun  
they bare to the rear and every one  
they stayed to shade beneath the palm  
that waves by the way, the only one—  
blessed be thy shade, O grateful palm !  
But nought of philtre, nought of charm  
saving their presence and such care  
as love and sympathy can give  
had the women for the wounded brave,  
and to the most the Lord he gave  
the crown of martyrdom to share.  
But with the living men must live  
and to the women leave the dead,  
for the battle opes and the dawn is fled  
and in the banners here unfurled  
hangs all the coming of the world.  
' Behold, he chargeth !' Islam cries

triumphantly as Hashim hies  
and not a moment veers nor falters  
Hashim, nor once his course he alters,  
but with his warriors straight doth charge  
and the hordes of Persia pierceth through,  
even unto Euphrates' marge,  
then turning, fetcheth round again  
full circle on the dazzled plain,  
and the armies marvelled at the view.  
Welcome to Islam now they are  
Hashim and his and Cacao,  
for on the second day, Aglath,  
nought of the elephant Persia had,  
but on this third, the day Gemath,  
a vast, a new, a monstrous herd  
cometh from Chosrões Yezdegird  
with warriors manned and armour-clad.  
And when they charge must everywhere  
the Arab fall, and soon despair  
on the Arab faces giveth place  
to the early morning's valiant face.  
For trampled under foot and pounded  
are man and horse and quite confounded  
are Asim and his archers' band,  
for with a shield protected are  
the guiders of the elephants  
and Asim's arrows harmless glance  
like straws from off these armed places.  
Then in the hour of peril Sad  
bethought him of some Persians who  
refuge within Codeïs had,  
and from these recreants he knew  
that the elephant's eye the deadly place is.  
Then unto Cacao he writ  
where on the battlefield he raged  
(and thirty men by midday slew

Cacaa alone) and the letter said :  
' O Cacaa, thou alone art fit  
to rid us of calamity ;  
Take then whom most thou wilt with thee  
and pierce the elephants in the eye,  
for if thou pierce them deep they die.'  
And having read the missive stayed  
Cacaa his combat and with him  
took but one friend his brother Asim,  
and toward the herd their way they made.  
And of the monstrous breed were twain  
monsters of monsters, one was black,  
but the most monstrous he was white,  
splashed red with blood, and for attack  
lo ! first they choose the elephant white.  
And on his left side Asim shows,  
but Cacaa creepeth on the right  
even to his ear and see ! has thrust  
into his little eye the lance.  
Belloweth loud the beast and throws  
and pounds his warriors in the dust  
and winds his tube round Cacaa,  
and as a missile hurtling far  
over the plain the warrior goes.  
Certes but little esperance  
hath Asim as he raiseth up  
his brother stunned and to his lips  
holdeth the crystal water cup ;  
gently the water Cacaa sips  
and as he sips comes back again  
memory and sense and : ' ha ! perdie !  
where be the elephant I lost ?  
By the Prophet's beard full near his brain  
forged my lance ere yet I crossed  
so rapidly Kadesia's plain.  
Two things I lost—the elephant white

and Cacao, now finding me  
seek I the elephant,' and : ' Bright  
O brother Cacao shines thy deed,'  
spake Asim ; ' turn thee and behold !  
And Cacao turned him and he saw  
the monster maddened, uncontrolled,  
dash on the Arabs, and a score  
of lances met him and his speed  
was as a rock from mountain rolled,  
as on the Persian ranks returning  
and like a moving furnace burning,  
he rolled him to his monstrous herd.  
What vasty elephantine word  
spake he unto them ? none can tell ;  
but they his meaning knew full well,  
for straight their monstrous tubes uprearing,  
roaring and trampling, smashing, tearing,  
all in their path they pound their ways  
even to Euphrates and enorme  
plunge they within, and now the storm  
of arms is still, for mute amaze  
falls on both armies as they gaze  
on that portentous company,  
like islands swimming in the sea,  
and now they gain the distant shore  
as all men gaze and now no more  
are visible—and all men fall  
to arms again and soon the plain  
rings with the clashing of the sword,  
whistles with passage of the arrow,  
hears hero unto hero call,  
for very well do all men know  
that he that wins is overlord  
of all the world and he that loseth  
for best of fate Euphrates' wave  
unto a bed of respite chooseth.



Yea, hard were the knocks they gat and gave,  
and again a doubtful ending has  
the third day's battle hight Gemas.  
Endeth the day but the battle not,  
for scarce had the Persian warriors got  
within their tents and the shades of eve  
crept o'er the plain when the Arabs leave  
their quiet tents and stealthily  
creep towards the tents where now they sleep,  
the weary Persian enemy;  
for well they argued that the night  
would favour those that chose to fight  
beneath her mantle ; so they fell  
upon the Persian. Forge of hell  
never shall ring with shout and yell  
more awful as the Persian flies  
to arms and to Persian Persian cries,  
Arab to Arab, and they fight  
through the black watches of the night,  
the Night of Clangour dark and gory  
shows sable with a sombre glory  
against the gold of Islam's story.  
And on the fourth day all amazed  
the sun upon Kadesia blazed,  
for lo, the Persian stood his ground  
heroic though the Arab's wound  
like serpents in his lion's mane.  
Then Cacao cried : ' Come charge again,  
for victory ever doth attend  
him that endureth to the end.'  
Thus Cacao speaks, and straight they charge  
with spear and lance and bristling targe  
the Persian centre. ' Lo ! they break,'  
shouts Cacao, as a mighty rent  
even through the Persian centre went.  
And blue Euphrates gleamed through

the riven coat of Persia's valour  
and then did Islam first have view  
of Rustem's throne and canopy,  
where on Euphrates' bank they were.  
Sudden a fearsome wind there blew  
and the unguarded canopy  
into Euphrates' waves it threw.  
Now 'Allah Akbar !' loud they shout  
and now begins the Persian rout,  
and Rustem flies from his golden throne  
and hides him 'neath an ass's pack,  
but a chance javelin hurtling thrown  
bringeth the load on the Prince's back  
and now Euphrates' kindly wave  
must wounded Rustem seek for grave ;  
but scarce hath he plungèd him therein  
when by a passing warrior seen  
dragged to the bank he is straightway slain,  
and on the golden throne the slayer  
climbeth and doth the death declare,  
and his voice echoeth o'er the plain.  
And the slayer from his body took  
jewels for seventy thousand pieces,  
but vainly for the crown must look  
merged in the bosom of Euphrates,  
and for the jewelled panther's banner  
ta'en on the field the taker's price is  
an hundred thousand golden pieces,  
and of Jalenus when he fell  
by Zohra's lance the jewelled wonders  
make Sad to pause and ask of Omar  
if such vast treasure could be well  
given to the slayer of Jalenus—  
but from Medina Omar thunders :  
' Give all the jewels unto Zohra  
and that there be no doubt between us

see that thou add five hundred pieces,  
and see such doubt for ever ceases.'  
Thus right and left and far and near  
Islam triumphs at Kadesia,  
for though the chieftain Hormuzan  
escaped with some, and Firuzan  
fled ere they reached him by the dawn  
even to the mound of Babylon,  
yet is the victory complete,  
and now the Persian nobles greet  
the Arab conqueror and Sad  
rules as its lord the whole Sawad.  
But of the Tigris, how they swam  
its roaring stream and lit upon  
the bank, and the Persian fled away  
unto the mountains, and Madain  
and the palace white of Chosroës -  
the great white palace of the plain --  
cowered before them—all of this  
asks more of eloquence than mine,  
asks more of patience than is thine,  
methinks Mansour, since now to thee  
are wealth and power for mockery,  
but give me ear one word to tell  
of the treasures which to Islam fell  
when Yezdegird with all his herd  
of courtiers, wives, and concubines,  
fled unto Holwan from Madain,  
and Islam on that couch reclines  
where the best of all things beauteous shines,  
nor thinks to yield the couch again.  
First, then, behold those mules whose freight  
is well concealed as past the gate  
and towards Holwan they fare. Full soon  
beneath the big eye of the moon  
hath Islam led them back again,

a long grey string unto Madain.  
What lieth hid beneath the mean  
straw matting as they hoist them down  
those mule-loads? First the Chosroës' crown  
and robes and girdles such as seen  
once then the sumptuous robes of dream  
mere base reality must seem.  
A camel of silver, camel-size,  
with a golden rider who for eyes  
twin diamonds hath, a golden horse  
whose neck a ruby and his teeth  
sapphire, and carved trappings sheath  
his golden sides and fixed beneath  
his hoofs an emerald meadow cross.  
And of the weapons five there were  
swords of a worth beyond compare,  
not for the priceless jewels which  
do court the splendid blade of each,  
but for their history glamorous.  
First of the glorious blades to us  
had the sword of mighty Cæsar come  
imperial from imperial Rome,  
and next the sword of the Chosroës  
unto a gift for Omar is,  
and the sword of the Cæsar maketh glad  
the side come whole of noble Sad,  
and the sword of Bahram fallen from heaven  
is to the hero Cacao given,  
and on the blade there stands engraven :  
'The sword of the mighty hunter Bahram,  
mighty before the Lord I am.  
Let not a lesser hero dare  
my blade against his side to wear :'  
and the Arabs laughed and said that fate  
unto the sword a lord more great  
than even Bahram was had given.

And the sword from the prince of Hira riven  
likewise on Omar was bestowed,  
and the fabled sword of the King of Hind  
(whose distant fame the ages blind)  
bold Asim to his belt may bind.  
Torrents of wealth for Islam flowed,  
yea, gold and silver now became  
unto the Arabs cheap as fame.  
Amber and sandal-wood and musk,  
and camphor which for salt they took  
and having used to knead their rusk  
straight as with fear the bravest shook  
and straight their very souls did spue.  
Loud laughed their fellows at the view,  
yet soon such mysteries Islam knew.  
But of the splendours one there is  
more than all splendid, and I sing  
this ere an end to all I bring,  
the carpet where did feast the King,  
the King of kings, the Chosroës.  
Made for a Paradise, emeralds green  
are all its meadows, and there wind  
pathways of gold its banks between,  
yet some be silver, and from trees  
of emerald leaf do fowls take wing,  
fowls of ruby and sapphire sheen,  
or in its branches they do sing  
right pleasantly, a rare device  
known not to other Paradise,  
or they will dip their beaks within  
rivers of pearl, and flowers of gem  
do hang in blossom over them.  
Thus is in all its wondrous ways  
this Paradise for an amaze  
to Islam and its breadth outspread  
is as a meadow's breadth to tread.

And Omar when this paradise  
before him at Medina lies  
asketh of one and of the other  
what should be done therewith, and some  
cry : ' Let us keep it as a treasure—  
trophy of Islam's arms for ever ; '  
but Ali speaketh and doth smother  
the wiser voices and they come  
and with the shears of shame they sever  
the emeralds of the paradise,  
they fright for ever from the trees  
those birds that sang so soft to please  
the King of kings, the Chosroës,  
and rent in pieces see it lies  
thy carpet, O King Chosroës,  
whose kingdom as thy carpet is.  
Yea, with the carpet hath it end,  
for though upon the field of Rei  
and again at bloody Nehavend  
did Yezdegird the sword ongird,  
yet a like issue had alway  
the call to arms, nor will I stay  
to tell how hapless Yezdegird  
fleeing from Rei to Ispahan  
found there no refuge, and to Merv  
came and implored the Turkish Khan  
and the Emperor of the Yellow Seas,  
yet little help gat he of these  
and what he gat did little serve,  
and o'er the Oxus fled and died  
in a miller's hut where he must hide  
from Islam's harrying, abject, lone—  
begging a crust that lost a throne.  
Nor will I tell ye how the name  
Amrou in Egypt great became,  
and Egypt all to Islam came,

lest this my song be all too long  
 unto your ears—but these our wars  
 have true religion for their cause,  
 for had the faith of Islam been  
 but folly think ye we had seen  
 before the hungry, paucous, thin  
 tribes of our Arabs all the world  
 down as an airy castle hurled?  
 Nay, and of Islam better proof  
 after the Prophet is there none  
 than the victories by Islam won.  
 Now, all give ear, for with approval  
 of ye that hearken, guests of mine,  
 and of ye that cluster in the shade  
 longer each passing moment made,  
 would I bend me down and draw the line  
 of crimson which from Omar's side  
 shall lead to Othman and again  
 dipping in Othman's blood make plain  
 the chasm which did the world divide,  
 until the great Muavia mended  
 those ills which Ali's rule attended.  
 First then of Omar and the knife  
 of the slave Feroze which slowly ended  
 in dripping blood the Kaliph's life.  
 'Nay, let me bleed, that speedily  
 with the blessed in Paradise I may be,'  
 groaned Omar as they bare him home,—  
 'but see that Abd al Rahman come.'  
 And in the moment Abd al Rahman  
 unto the dying Kaliph ran.  
 'Hail to thee! Hail!' quoth Omar. 'Oft  
 when 'neath my frown bowed Islam down,  
 when 'neath my heel were hard things soft,  
 have I said to thee: Even as this grass  
 would that the Kaliph Omar was.



Therefore lament not now, my friend,  
 that with this wound my life hath end,  
 but ere I seek the welcome tomb,  
 say, wilt thou govern in my room?'

Then Abd al Rahman: 'Am I bound  
 to bear this burden, or may choose?'

'Nay, by the Lord thou art not bound,'  
 spake Omar. 'Then I do refuse  
 such grievous honour' 'Staunch my wound,'  
 cries Omar, 'since I may not lose  
 the Kaliphate ere I have placed it  
 on shoulders for such burden fit.'

Therefore they staunched the wound and seven  
 electors chose the Kaliph Omar :  
 Othman and Ali, Abd al Rahman,  
 Sad, Talha, Zobeir and Abdallah  
 his only son, whose vote must be  
 with Abd al Rahman's. Presently  
 drank the Kaliph of the date-water  
 which the leech pourèd from his jar,  
 but through the wound the same did ooze,  
 and Omar to Abdallah said :

'Gently raise up thy father's head  
 even from the pillow and dispose  
 upon the ground, for peradventure  
 this very night the Lord may choose  
 to spare me what I must endure  
 if on the rising sun these eyes  
 must gaze through all their miseries.'

And as Omar bid Abdallah did,  
 and on the bosom of Abdallah  
 lay Omar's head, and : 'Hard it were  
 now for my soul had I not been  
 a true believer, and each prayer  
 and every fast have I observèd.'

Thus Omar spake, and now between

the silences the whisper fervid :  
' No other God there is but God  
and his Prophet he is Mohammad,'  
came to Abdallah, then he sighed  
a mighty sigh and Omar died  
in the still night. None mightier had  
ever the sands of Araby trod  
than Omar after Mohammad :  
Persia and Syria of Byzance  
and Egypt all to Islam's lance  
fell under Omar, and his whip  
ruled as the master of a ship  
the world of Islam--great and small  
alike beneath its thong must fall ;  
yet modest in his might withal,  
that the traveller in the Great Mosque standing  
full oft did ask of a commanding  
yet simple Arab if perchance  
of the mighty Omar but one glance  
unto his curious eyes might be—  
and the Arab answered : ' I am he.'  
When Omar passed three days debated  
those choosers, yet the choice belated,  
fell not on any, since the choices  
for two declared with equal voices :  
Othman or Ali : and these were  
both to the Prophet very dear,  
though Ali was by kin more near,  
his very cousin, and Fatima  
his daughter Ali's bed did share,  
yet of the Prophet's sisters two  
to wife had Othman and : ' A third  
right willingly I had conferred  
on Othman if the Lord another  
sister had granted to the brother  
of Rockeya and of Om Kolthûm,'

said the Prophet when too early knew  
 these sisters twain the common doom.  
 Now to decide the urgent claim  
 all Islam to the Great Mosque came,  
 and Abd al Rahman by his name  
 called upon Ali first : ' Dost thou,  
 O Ali, bind thyself even now  
 to rule by the covenant of the Lord,  
 to do according to His word  
 the Prophet's teaching, and the rule  
 of his successors take for school ? '  
 Ali made answer : ' Yea, I hope  
 that as thou sayest I should do  
 so far as lieth in my scope.'  
 A weakling's answer ! and Abd al Rahman  
 turned him and called next on Othman :  
 and for an answer were but few  
 the words of Othman : ' Yea, I will.'  
 Then Abd al Rahman turned toward Heaven  
 his face and cried : ' O Lord, bear witness  
 that the burden which around my neck is  
 the same to Othman I have given.'  
 And having spoken he saluted  
 Othman for Kaliph, and the people  
 even as Abd al Rahman did—  
 but hatred Ali's heart did fill  
 as he did homage, but he hid  
 his hatred, and ten year he waited  
 ere Othman's blood his vengeance sated.  
 Gentle was Othman and did yearn  
 Islam with gentleness to rule  
 as who with honey bears should school,  
 but weakness weareth gentleness  
 oft for a cloak, and soon men saw  
 where in the cloak was weakness' flaw.  
 But of two Persian towns one word—

Kufa and Bussorah—must be heard,  
twin towns which grew with Islam's coming.  
And all day long was busy humming  
within the walls of Bussorah,  
within the Kufan walls, that hive  
of drones that loved with words to strive,  
to eat the honey bees had won.  
Yea, from the Kufans first begun  
was the rift in Islam, and they made  
fresh progress ever in the shade  
with serpents curling in their tongue,  
haters of Othman, and they wrung  
what terms they would ; one after other  
followed their governors, another  
aye treading in his fellow's path—  
but discontent for kingdom hath  
those factious cities lapped in gold,  
where all but steadfastness is sold.  
And yet another parlous thing,  
for Othman was the signet ring  
of the Prophet with his name engraven  
to Abou Bekr by the Prophet given,  
and worn by both and worn by Omar,  
by Othman worn, by Othman lost  
in the well Aris—this the most  
of evil to his cause by far  
wrought of his follies, for simple are  
the common folk, and when they knew  
that though men sifted and men sought  
each grain of the well of Aris' sand,  
but found the silver signet not,  
shook they their empty heads, and : ' Nought  
but ill from Othman's ringless hand  
shall be for Islam ; ' thus they spake  
in folly, but the people make  
their silly dreams come all too true

as did the giant, 'neath the yew  
 who dreamed the tree fell on his head  
 and dreaming haled it down indeed.  
 Yea, weak and partial, kind yet proud  
 was Othman of the Ommeya,  
 thus with the Kaliphate endowed  
 in evil hour, and gibe and sneer  
 spared not the Hashimites, and Ali  
 was the centre point where they did rally.  
 And in the Great Mosque on a day  
 stood Othman with his governors  
 of Kufa, Bussorah, Damascus,  
 and Abou Sarh from far Fostât<sup>1</sup>  
 around him—Othman standing thus  
 spake to the people : ' Naught from me  
 but all from Omar cheerfully  
 ye did endure, but now behold  
 if aught of land or tithe or gold  
 from any of ye I did take  
 unwittingly, the same I will  
 unto the loser now fulfil.  
 How oft did Omar curse and break  
 and trample on ye, yet ye bare  
 from Omar all, from Othman naught,  
 but oh, I pray ye, cease to jeer  
 and flout my rule, lest now be brought  
 Islam to ruin.' Many a sneer  
 flitted around the mosque to hear  
 such piteous prayer, but Muavia  
 came unto Ali, Zobeir, Talha,  
 and standing by them spake he thus :  
 ' Behold I go unto Damascus  
 my government, and lo, I leave  
 this aged helpless man to ye  
 since that he will not fare with me.

<sup>1</sup> Cairo.

Now do ye keep him and relieve  
the aged Kaliph's great distress,  
whose power and strength are less and less—  
help him and better 'tis for ye.'  
Thus spake Muavia kindly-wise,  
and Ali sware with smiles and lies,  
and those sware with him that they would  
do unto Othman all things good.  
Then they departed, Sad, Muavia,  
Ibn Aamir, and Abou Sarh—  
Kufa, Damascus, Bussorah,  
and Egypt—and as Muavia  
went forth, said Jewish Kab: 'The grey  
mule of Syria wins the day.'  
And at the time no man gave heed  
unto the Jew, though true indeed  
have come his words of prophecy.  
Scarce did there wane a moon or twain  
when rebel bands from Bussorah,  
from Kufa, and from Egypt are  
seeking an entrance to Medina.  
They ask and ask not long in vain,  
for thick with traitors teems the city—  
rebels with nought of care nor pity  
for Othman nor for Islam's fate  
cry that he leave the Kaliphate.  
But: 'Never will these hands do off  
the robe wherewith the Lord hath girded  
the Commander of the Faithful,' answered  
Othman—and dust and stones and scoff  
cast they at Othman when they heard it—  
yet Othman daily preached the word  
of God from the pulpit—till the day  
they drave the faithful few away  
and a heavy stone struck Othman's face  
so that he swooned in his place  
fallen on the pulpit, and Merwan,

cousin of Othman, bare him back  
to the palace and the rebels made  
of Othman's palace the blockade.  
Water, not courage did they lack,  
the faithful few, and therefore Othman  
climbed to his palace-roof and cried :  
' To ye, my brethren, have I given  
the well of Ruma, yet denied  
is a drop of water unto me  
whom the Prophet loved ! how oft his hand  
hath rested even in this hand,  
this wrinkled hand which aye hath striven  
to work ye well '—and now to heaven  
upraised Othman both his hands  
and prayed that less despitefully  
of his people he might used be.  
But Ali, Talha, and Zobeir,  
well may ye ask where these three were,  
though each a son they did afford  
to keep o'er Othman watch and ward.  
Ali alone could stem the tide  
that whelmèd Othman, yet did hide  
his head within his palace gate  
content, he said, to hope and wait  
that all with Othman might be well ;  
such was his hope—if well be ill—  
and soon doth fate the end fulfil.  
But for a moment's space to tell  
how Om Habiba, the Prophet's widow,  
Muavia's sister, touched with pity  
upon her mule to carry water  
to Othman all alone did go,  
but as she passed the rebels caught her,  
cut at her bridle with their swords,  
and drave her back with angry words—  
the kindest heart in all the city.



Yea, Ali, Talha, and Zobeir  
well may ye ask where these three were,  
but worthier than their mighty sires  
their sons did blaze with mighty fires  
guarding the ancient, and they made  
at the palace gate a barricade.  
Then came the news that Muavia  
movèd from Syria, and fear  
spurred on the rebels and they brake  
the barricade and forced the gate  
and sought the Kaliph, and they found him  
where Merwan and his house surround him ;  
and the son of Abou Bekr would slake  
his hatred and the long grey beard  
seizèd of Othman where he sat  
and shook and cursed the agèd man.  
But when he saw who first had dared  
to use him so : ' My brother's son !  
thus had thy father never done,'  
said Othman, and the raging hate  
of the son of Abu Bekr outran  
and he drew back, but Ammar came  
and smote the Kaliph that his blood  
on the leaves of Al Koran outflowed  
which in his agèd hand he held  
and the words of the second Sura spelled.  
And then they trampled under their feet  
the holy Book, but Othman bent  
and gathered in his arms the same  
all bloody severed leaves ; and fleet  
ran the fair Naila, Othman's wife,  
brave, young, and beauteous, and they went,  
white arms of her around the bent  
grey head, to guard her husband's life.  
Ammar's or Ashtar's, whose the sword  
that smote her fingers and they fell

upon the ground?—a tale to tell  
which in the temple of the Lord  
within the gates of Damascus city  
moved men at arms to tears of pity,  
to tears of pity—and the sword.  
This done, they stabbed and stabbed again  
Othman and leaped upon his body,  
and from fair Naila tore her veil  
(hands fingerless can ne'er prevail)  
till the very sunlight seemèd bloody.  
And all her prayers at first were vain  
for no man dared to take the body  
for burial, till at last Zobeir,  
and Hasan, son of Ali, came  
(mark well this last, a fateful name),  
and as they bare him to the grave  
full many a stone did strike the bier  
showing how well those haters hated  
whose hatred was with death unsated.  
And in the Garden of the Star  
buried the bones of Othman are,  
and round the murdered Othman's grave  
cluster the best of bright and brave  
of Othman's tribe the Ommeya.  
And as they piled the sand on him  
sped through the night o'er the desert dim  
one who a ghastly missive bore :  
a bloody shift stabbed o'er and o'er,  
a bloody shift and fingers four.  
Unto Damascus straight he sped  
and at Muavia's feet he laid  
the sad last relic of their master  
and told him of the great disaster.  
And in the mosque Muavia nailèd  
those relics and the women wailèd,  
and the men muttered in their beard

as the all-eloquent shift they neared  
and passed aside, yet stood around  
the mosque and waited one for other,  
and each one muttered to his brother  
like thunders rolling under ground.  
But in Medina, Othman dead,  
duly reigned Ali in his stead,  
and to his Persian cities writ—  
Kufa and Bussorah—but they  
are fickle as the veering wind,  
and though their answers both be, Yea,  
yet in their tongues do serpents wind  
even as for Othman and they sit  
hatching all evil.

Ali writ  
unto Muavia in Syria.  
And first he told of Othman's death,  
how Hasan had his life defended  
and how the murderers as was fit  
unto the arm of justice given  
should breathe their last of human breath  
in retribution, but he ended :  
'Lo, now thy government is riven  
from thee, Muavia, and is given  
unto Ibn Abbas,' and he signed :  
'Ali, commander of the Faithful.'  
Bold were the words that Ali writ,  
yea, bolder than their bearer was—  
Abbas who never dared to cross  
the Syrian border and the order  
of Ali met the silent scorn  
which is of strength and patience born.  
Muavia moved not but said :  
'Wait till we see how long the dead  
must wait for justice upon Ali.'  
'Wait, let us wait, the Lord will guide us,'

said Ali, and the murderers trod Medina's streets as though no God looked down upon them from on high. But in the Great Mosque of Damascus armèd the Lord his lightning was. Day clomb upon the back of night and Ali's messenger must wait and wonder at Damascus' gate, for indeed it was a wondrous sight to see the surging waves of men controlled by great Muavia.

At the last Muavia took the pen and writ and the missive gave to one Cabisa hight and bade him speed straight unto Ali with the screed. And when to Ali's side he won Cabisa bowed him low and then drew forth the missive : 'from Muavia to Ali,' ran the superscription which Ali read and brake the seal—then silence as he stared upon the blank white sheet.

'Reveal, I bid thee, straight reveal the meaning which the blanks conceal,' commanded Ali, and Cabisa blenched as he craved to know his fate if all the truth he should relate.

'Safe is thy life, ambassador,' made answer Ali.

thy hand to save an agèd man  
loved of the Prophet, chosen to be  
Kaliph o'er Islam by the free  
choice whereunto thou didst agree  
of Abd al Rahman.'

'Upon me  
seek they for vengeance ! seest thou not  
that I am powerless, God wot,  
as I am innocent, to avenge  
the death of Othman, get thee gone,  
see thou art safe,' cried Ali. 'None  
shall harm thee.'

To the pulpit mounted  
Ali and Syria's breach recounted,  
called upon all to fight the foe  
that would rend Islam now asunder.  
But Talha and Zobeir did go  
forth unto Mecca and full slow  
filled up the ranks and coming thunder  
spake in Aïcha's voice who cried :  
' Ill ! ill ! the arms of him betide  
that dare not vengeance take for Othman.'  
And when men heard her voice began  
their hopes for something new and strange  
and Talha and Zobeir to her  
did join themselves and forth she went  
from Mecca : ' Mother of the Faithful,'  
and nigh three thousand men did range  
themselves beneath their ' mother's ' banner,  
and as they fared towards Bussorah  
forth from her litter oft she bent  
and spake to them of Othman's gore  
and of the Prophet tales galore  
told she to them—and eloquent  
was Aïcha, mother of the Faithful.  
Now in Bussorah Zobeir, Talha

had friends and spies and with Aïcha  
to aid full soon the city lay  
at their command, but Muavia  
joined not unto them nor did Kufa,  
and Ali movèd upon Kufa  
with his Medinans and when near  
Kufa he was, he writ and prayed  
that they should be for him to aid.  
But at the first the Kufans were  
rather for those of Bussorah,  
and all their answers came evasive,  
until that Ali sent his son—  
Hasan he sent, that elder one—  
and unto Hasan they did give  
what to his father they refusèd.  
Why did they so? No man may know  
save that the Lord he made them so  
those men of Kufa—yea, the vane  
compared to them is firmly fixèd.  
But though more strong, was Ali fain  
to win a bloodless victory,  
and with the rebels parleyed he  
awhile upon Bussorah's plain,  
Zobeir and Talha—and they drew  
more near and all seemed smooth again,  
and Kufans with Bussorans spake  
and both with the men of Medina.  
Yea, verily the sky serener  
and all things tranquil seemed that night  
as peace with the morrow's dawn should break.  
But neither recked upon the blight  
in Ali's army as they slept  
in peace and quiet, for there crept  
towards the camps a desperate pair,  
Ammar and Ashtar, those that slew  
Othman, and well indeed they knew

that never Talha nor Zobeir,  
 nor Ali if he would might spare  
 their lives save now they forced the fight  
 beneath the cover of the night.  
 Full eighty thousand men they were  
 asleep beneath the quiet stars  
 dreaming an end of blood and wars,  
 when on a sudden yells and screams  
 burst rudely in upon their dreams.  
 'Treason!' they cried, the men of Mecca,  
 and 'Treason!' shouted they of Kufa,  
 Medina, Bussorah, and all  
 seized on their arms and furious fighting  
 filled the grey dawn; the sword of Ali  
 which never once he drew in vain  
 flashed here and there upon the plain  
 upon the Moslems' heads alighting,  
 and to and fro the ostrich plume  
 of Talha flourished in the gloom.  
 And brother upon brother ran  
 and 'Treason! treason!' all did cry,  
 and smote, nor knew the reason why,  
 and 'Treason' cried and smote again.  
 And Talha fell, and Zobeir fell,  
 and now the rebel rout began.  
 But as they passed in flight they saw  
 a camel bristling o'er and o'er  
 with arrows like a hedgehog's back,  
 and from the prickly litter shrill  
 a woman's voice the air did fill.  
 Hark how she screameth, 'Kill! kill! kill!  
 the bloody murderers of Othman.'  
 And round the camel the attack  
 rageth and word flies round: 'In peril  
 is Aïcha, mother of the Faithful.'  
 At the word the hero blood again



coursed in each fleeing Moslim's vein,  
and lo! a second strife began  
around the camel, for they stayed  
their flight and gallant stand they made  
around the camel ; seventy died  
of bluest blood at the bridle's side,  
and with the standard many a score  
scattered the dusty desert o'er.  
But Ali when he knew they died  
by hundreds at her camel's side  
sent one of his who with a knife  
did slit the camel's leg, that thrown  
on its knees it fell and gave a groan  
of fearsome portent and they bare  
the litter to a quiet place  
and on the ground they placed it there,  
and none dared look upon her face  
saving her brother, till the strife  
was passed and Ali came alone  
unto the litter and bending down :  
' May the Lord have mercy upon thee  
for what hath passèd here this day,'  
said Ali. ' And on thee,' she said,  
quickly in answer, but Ali gave  
unto Aïcha all of best  
within Bussorah and she stayed  
awhile to take the needful rest  
after the battle ; many a maid  
Ali unto Aïcha gave,  
and toward Mecca fared the Mother  
of the Faithful, and with her fared her brother  
and Ali walked a mile or twain  
to do her honour at her rein.  
And unto Mecca she returnèd,  
and many a year the faithful burnèd  
sitting within Aïcha's room

where also is the Prophet's tomb  
 to hear her tales of how he walked  
 and ate and drank, and slept and talked,  
 and how he looked when down from heaven  
 came Gabriel and the word was given.  
 Thus at the Battle of the Camel,  
 thus to Aïcha it befell.  
 But of the Battle of Siffin  
 come I to speak nor will begin  
 to tell how Ali forced Muavia  
 to sally forth from Syria,  
 nor of the first day's fighting tell,  
 nor of the second Night of Clangour,  
 save but to say that Muavia  
 with Amrou joined and all the valour  
 of Islam fought together here  
 one side or other, and there fell  
 for Ali, Hashim—as he fell  
 (Hashim, hero of Kadesia)  
 cried Ammar, cried the regicide :  
 'O Paradise, how close they hide  
 their beauties 'neath the point of arrow!  
 O Hashim, now is heaven opened,  
 and round thy neck the houris throw  
 their arms, yea, now are all things brightened  
 and of his years is Ammar lightened.'  
 Thus singing, in the thick o' the strife  
 lost Ammar as he longed his life—  
 and his years were fourscore years and ten.  
 These twain were of the mightiest men  
 e'er born to Islam, yet dismay  
 did fill Muavia's ranks when they  
 were 'ware how Ammar passed away,  
 thinking upon a prophecy :  
 'By a godless and rebellious race  
 ended at last shall be thy days,'

once spake the Prophet, but Amrou  
 who ever the word of wisdom knew  
 answered: 'By Allah, that be true,  
 but who brought Ammar here to die,  
 who save "rebellious, godless" Ali?'  
 Fall they to fighting once again,  
 and Ashtar chargeth home, and lo!  
 emptied is quiver, emptied bow,  
 and hand to hand they fight amain  
 and with exceeding valour of arm  
 fights Ashtar, since to win or die  
 for Ashtar is necessity—  
 being of the slayers of Kaliph Othman.  
 And in Muavia's heart doth qualm  
 follow on qualm, and Amrou saith:  
 'Come, let us call on Al Koran,  
 let us fix the leaves on the points of lances  
 and make appeal unto the faith,  
 perchance the enemy will hearken  
 and at the least some short reprieve  
 from slaughter this our deed shall give.'  
 So said so done, and now advances  
 Amrou with leaves of Al Koran  
 atop his lance and loud he cried:  
 'The Law of the Lord! The Law of the Lord!  
 The Law of the Lord! let that decide  
 between Muavia and Ali.'  
 And at the word the surging tide  
 of battle stayed and either side  
 shouted in unison. But Ali  
 when now he saw they fought no more  
 stepped forth and spake: 'Those rebels try  
 thus to defeat us with their words  
 when now they perish 'neath our swords.'  
 Thus Ali spake and spake a lie  
 seeing that neither side had won

nor lost nor gainèd on the other.  
 But Ali's speaking was in vain,  
 nor Ashtar's fiery hot disdain  
 hot from the battle worked not on them ;  
 for when Ashtar cried : ' But yesterday  
 ye fought for the Lord and martyr brother  
 sped heavenward, now the valiant one  
 by this your doing ye condemn  
 unto the blazing fires of hell.'  
 ' Not so,' they answered. ' Yesterday  
 we fought for the Lord, but lo ! to-day  
 for the Lord likewise the fight we stay.'  
 Thus worketh the wisdom of Amrou well,  
 since upon Ali truce he forces  
 and Ashtar stays his fiery courses.  
 And to Muavia Ali sendeth  
 that he may know the inward meaning  
 of Al Koran on the lance-point gleaming.  
 And thus Muavia answereth :  
 ' That ye and we alike should look  
 for the will of the Lord in the Holy Book ;  
 and let an arbiter be found  
 by each and each by his word be bound.'  
 Now when the men of Ali know  
 the answers greatly they rejoice  
 and with unanimous loud voice  
 for arbiter in the strife they choose a  
 ruler of Kufa, Abou Musa,  
 Ah ! vainly then did Ali plead  
 for Abbas vainly did he show  
 his hatred of good Abou Musa,  
 him whom he once drave forth from Kufa.  
 ' For Abou Musa, none but he,  
 shall be for arbiter between ye,'  
 cried out the Kufans ; and Muavia  
 chose Amrou and the Kaliphs signèd

a parchment wherein each resigned  
his will to the words of Al Koran,  
and where these failed, to tradition.  
And to the chosen arbiters  
Amrou and Abou Musa clear  
six moons to ponder thereupon,  
and Duma where to give decision  
appointed those the first great signers,  
the Kaliphs Muavia and Ali,  
and each made oath he would abide  
with the decision, and every man  
of name or fame on either side  
signed saving Ashtar : ' Ne'er again  
this for my good right hand could be,  
if now I signed such infamy,'  
cried Ashtar, murderer of Othman—  
thus were we spared a blood-stained pen.  
And the six moons passed and Ali came  
from Kufa even unto Duma  
and came from Syria Muavia  
and Amrou came and Abou Musa  
and in a separate lone pavilion  
discussed the twain, and a mighty throng  
upon the great decision waited.  
Spake Amrou first : ' Do ye proclaim  
unto the faithful our decision,  
O Abou Musa,' and : ' Full long  
have I with Amrou here debated  
what now for Islam best were done,'  
said Abou Musa :  
' Now hear, O peoples ! we depose  
both Ali and Muavia  
and now hath Islam ne'er a ruler,  
but since from ye all virtue goes,  
O peoples, ye must be the chooser  
of the new Kaliph !'

Thus he spake  
and stepped apart and Amrou brake  
the awful silence : ' Ye have heard,  
O peoples, Abou Musa's word !  
Behold ! is Ali now deposèd  
also by me, but Muavia  
him do I now confirm to be  
for Kaliph over all of ye,  
heir unto Othman and avenger  
of Othman's blood, Muavia !'  
Yea, thus his answer Amrou throws it  
upon the listeners, thus surrender  
makes Abou Musa of the power  
which in an evil-starrèd hour  
came unto Ali. And Muavia  
unto Damascus straight returnèd,  
but Ali with a heart that burnèd  
hied him to Kufa and must fight  
first with the rebel Kharejite.  
But how he conquered these, yet fell  
at the last beneath the vengeful sword  
of Ibu Muljame I will not tell.  
Nor of his sons, Hasan, Hosein,  
how the last fell upon the Plain ;  
for lo ! the shadows race toward  
each other o'er the charmed space  
by this my fountain, and no word  
need ye of mine to speak the line  
of the house of Ommeya that did rule  
first with Muavia, the grey mule  
whom now ye honour in Kaliph Merwan,  
Kaliph o'er Syria, Egypt, Persia,  
and Araby from our Damascus.  
Thus came the rule of the world to us  
by the word of the Lord and our good sword,  
and by the Lord we will hold the same

by the right of the sword and by the name  
of Allah and his holy Prophet  
who in high heaven is jealous of it,"  
said Zobeir, and for a moment's space  
fell silence in that echoing place,  
as the shades of night drew on apace  
and the doves unto the palm-trees flew  
and in their branches soft did coo.  
And the stars rose and all the heaven  
unto the beauteous night was given.  
O night, that with thy magic finger  
doth touch the world and nought may linger  
that dull or mean or vile or base is  
in any of thy charmed spaces.  
O night, O northern night, inspire  
my pen to tell of beauteous dire  
and dreadful deeds 'neath moon and star  
which in thy fairer heavens are.

Yea for a space were silent there  
the man of Ind and eke Zobeir  
and John Mansour and passed away  
some of that silent company  
beneath the palms, but others came  
that in the darkness aye the same  
seemed the listeners.

On the night  
flew the soft bats in circling flight  
and from the rosy trees hard by  
shrill came to them cicala's cry.  
Mansour, the man of Ind, Zobeir,  
three do they sit together there,  
but of a sudden the moon uplifteth  
her face above the lofty wall  
and where but now did shadows fall,  
shadow to moonlight sudden shifteth.



Three ? said I—three they be no more.  
“ Behold ! their company is four.  
Who standeth there behind Zobeir ? ”  
cried Mansour, “ art thou friend or foe ? ”  
And Zobeir turnèd him and lo  
illumined with the moony beam,  
where a moment past had darkness been  
stood one erect.

A long white cloak  
shrouded his person, and his face  
was hidden 'neath the steady gleam  
of a mask of gold, and a turban green  
wore he upon his head. He spoke  
no word, but steady in his place  
stood and the mask on Zobeir gazèd.  
Upsprang Al Zobeir all amazed,  
and : “ Who art thou that thus dost dare  
creep like a miscreant to my daïs ? ”  
Then came a voice from out the mask :  
“ Vainly for ever wouldst thou ask  
to know my name and many a way is  
for me to enter anywhere  
that I may will ! Nay, touch me not,  
lest sudden to an end be brought  
thy days,” the veiled figure said,  
and from Zobeir's hand the dagger fell  
as raised above his place an ell  
standing on air the figure shed  
upon that company his spell.  
And thus that prophet masked in gold  
of past and present and things to come  
but most of the blessed Hosein told,  
and while he spake were all men dumb  
and the stars of heaven slower crept  
their course and harkened, and the moon  
also did harken and ever kept

her beams upon the veiled prophet,  
 whom well she knew but spake not of it.  
 And the prophet came to earth again  
 and all he said was clear and plain  
 unto the ears of those that harkened.  
 Please God I have in no wise darkened  
 the telling of the tale he told  
 whose words and lips and face were gold.  
 "Verily now there is no word  
 which thou of Islam here hast spoken,  
 O Zobeir, that I have not heard,"  
 quoth the Prophet Veiled, "and for a token  
 will I tell nought to thee of what  
 thou hast told before, but passing o'er  
 come to the Plain of Kerbela.  
 Verily never an hundred year  
 pass o'er a people but is clear  
 by the will of the Lord the truth of those  
 that strive for the triumph of the right,  
 and the Lord into confusion throws  
 those that would make of day the night.  
 Yea, verily this is the word of God  
 and upon earth His Foot hath trod :  
 'Adam and Noah and Abraham,  
 Moses, Mohammad, these I am  
 and Ali and his son Hosein  
 the Imam slain upon the Plain,'  
 said the Lord, and was and is the same,  
 one God and mighty be His Name.  
 Now harken all, now all give ear  
 for what I say must all men hear.  
 Behold now, nigh an hundred year  
 over all Islam rulers are  
 the sons of Ommeya : Muavia  
 was first, and falsely hast thou told  
 how the vile Amrou's wit cajoled

the folly of Musa, how was sold  
 over all Islam Ali's rule  
 at the vain bidding of a fool,  
 of Abou Musa ; but of Yazid  
 his son accursed and the wrongs he did  
 unto the Family of the Cloak,<sup>1</sup>  
 no word of true nor of false was spoke.  
 Yea, night for an hundred year hath been  
 since Muavia, that man of sin,  
 bred Yazid on his concubine,  
 and the accursèd Yazid's sperm  
 bred on another such the worm  
 that hath for name the first Merwan.  
 And ever from worse to worst they ran  
 the writhing coils of Ommeya's line,  
 choking all Islam, for the good  
 of Omar<sup>2</sup> but as a dam withstood  
 the raging torrent, and the worst  
 over the meads of Islam burst  
 when Omar died, for another Yazid  
 accursèd too, as was the first,—  
 wine-bibber, hunter, panther-trainer—  
 reigned over Islam, a disdainer  
 of Al Koran, and the faithful harried  
 even as a kite, for pieces twain  
 of rarest wool for Yazid woven  
 two thousand golden dinars paid he  
 all from the store of the faithful stolen,—  
 thus took he Allah's name in vain.  
 And singers twain, his wantons, made he,  
 Hababa, Salama, to sit  
 one on the right, one on the left

<sup>1</sup> The direct lineal descendants of Mohammad were so called  
 because upon one occasion he threw a fold of the cloak he wore  
 around Ali, Fatima, and Hasan and Hosein, sons of Ali.

<sup>2</sup> Omar II.

upon his throne, and lo they made  
music and song, and drunk with wine  
Yazid his raiment bit by bit  
rent and of all his senses reft  
cried he unto them : ' Say, divine  
Hababa, say, Salama mine  
will ye that Yazid fly i' the air ? '  
Would that even then he had obeyed  
his will and unto hell were flown  
and of his seed no scion e'er  
left to befoul all Islam's throne.  
Thus were Islam free of tyrants three,  
and of the last, Merwan, who reigneth  
even now o'er Islam, nought explaineth  
better his being than his name  
which unto him from all men came ;  
for as Muavia ever was  
the Mule of Syria, nigh the same  
yet different is Merwan : the Ass.  
From east to west the wind doth blow  
and as I passed from Khorasan  
I saw the ashes all aglow  
that hide the Plain of Kerbela.  
From east to west the wind shall blow,  
yea, from the plain where first begun  
the deadly deeds of Kerbela  
did steep the world in tears of woe.  
From east to west, from west to east  
quickly the little flames shall run  
greater from less and less from least  
lit from the rubbing of the sticks,  
in them the west and the east shall mix ;--  
the words men spake at Kerbela.  
Now hear the truth.  
O tattered pages of sorrow's volume  
where shall I open, where begin ?

perchance 'tis best I usher in  
 gently and softly one by one  
 those lilies moving to their doom  
 over the sands to Kerbela,  
 thus were the teller's duty done,  
 or first of Virgin Fatima,  
 of Ali cousin of the Lord,  
 of the two worlds, of the Lord of Time  
 the Prophet speak in scented rhyme?  
 But that I fear lest thus I swerve,  
 let fall the bridle of reserve  
 from out my hand and lose the word  
 that shall of things divinest tell—  
 Hasan who is the flourishing rose,  
 Hosein the herb that ever grows  
 green in the meadow of the Prophet?  
 Reveal to me, O Nightingale  
 Mohammad of God's Unity,  
 what best for Islam were to profit?  
 what best for him that speaketh be?  
 Behold is every man persuaded  
 now that the bloom of thy face is faded  
 that nowhere can true rose-water  
 be found as the beads upon thy forehead,  
 Murtaza Ali,<sup>1</sup> Lion of Islam,  
 thou ark of honour, holy Imam,<sup>2</sup>  
 sire of the rose of the meadow of truth  
 Hasan, and Hosein pearly youth  
 of the sea of generosity.  
 Ali and Virgin Fatima,<sup>3</sup>  
 thou that wast made for ornament  
 to the Prophet's shoulders, counsel me,  
 what were the rosiest path I went?

<sup>1</sup> Murtaza Ali means Ali the Approved.

<sup>2</sup> Imams are inspired leaders of the people.

<sup>3</sup> The virginity of Fatima is a dogma of Islam.

O thorny path, the thornless rose  
Hosein alone thy winding knows !

Thus I begin when Ali passed  
forth from his home, and the waterfowl  
held to his garment sorrowful  
striving to stay him, for they knew  
that if he went to mosque their beak  
vainly his kindly hand would seek  
which the grain of friendship toward them cast.  
Yea verily very sorrowful  
were Ali's little waterfowl  
as round the Lion of God they flew  
prophetical, for well they knew  
that Ali the Lion of God's thicket  
must fall by the hand of Ibn Muljame,  
by the hand of Ibn Muljame the wicked,  
lover of Catema whose face is  
as the reward of all the virtues,  
but on her cheeks her raven tresses  
are as the black reward of shame.  
Yea, thus did Catema abuse  
her beauty, for : 'Thou hast me not  
till to my lap thou shalt have brought  
the head of Ali on a charger,'  
thus unto Ibn Muljame her lover,  
to Ibn Muljame the murderer,  
did speak the evil Catema.  
He strikes and like a crimson lily  
rolls in his blood Murtaza Ali.  
'And, O my family,' he cried,  
'ye of the Cloak, be at my side !'  
and like the clustering Pleiades  
around the moon their pieties  
were unto Ali and he died  
and the last word he said was this :

‘ See that to Ibn Muljame not worse is  
his death than unto Ali his.’

What of the murder of Hasan  
within Medina? this befell  
nine year from the death of Haidar Ali,  
for in his fear did Muavia  
roll in his mind the project fell  
and found (may every dæmon ban  
his name) the faithless wife Jaida,  
whom he did win to be his ally  
for a sum of gold, for when in sleep  
deep sunken was the Imam Hasan  
she whom his sacred love adorned,  
Jaida his wife did rub his body  
all over with a deadly poison  
that when he wake wild courses ran  
his blood and to his wife suborned  
spake thus her lord: ‘ No more upon  
thy breast for ever more shall rest  
the weary head of Imam Hasan,  
but clad in heavenly robes of green  
lo! I shall ever walk between  
the Prophet ’—scant was Hasan’s breath  
for upon him was the dust of death  
—‘ the Prophet and my Father Ali.  
And Hosein! see, my little Kasim,  
my son, the cypress of my orchard,  
I beg thee have a care for him  
for now are Hasan’s eyes grown dim  
and as with asps is Hasan tortured,  
O Hosein! (hear the Father’s whisper!)  
I beg thee guard him safe from her.’  
Thus spake they there to one another,  
Imam to Imam, brother to brother,  
and soon the murderer Muavia



may laugh and merry make him here  
within Damascus when he knows  
that groans and lamentations  
unto Hosein are for companions,  
who weeps the deepest of all woes,  
a brother dear untimely sped.  
But though Muavia quiet died  
let him think upon what Hasan cried  
in his great agony : ' For a night  
is this world only, let him wait  
till the Judgment Day when we shall meet  
before the Lord His Judgment Seat.'

So now I speak of the game of chess  
which slew the King of kings, the harmless  
Hosein and all those tender roses  
who in High Heaven are Allah's posies.  
For Yazid when Muavia died  
waited to see what might betide  
to the other pearl of virtue's sea  
(whose name is as a ring to me  
fixed in mine ear). And Hosein fled  
to the Holy City, and Muslim said :  
' May I be offered unto thee  
O Hosein for a sacrifice—  
an offering for thy perfumed locks—  
behold my heart for ever knocks  
within my bosom and mine eyes  
strain upon Kufa where they are  
that call thee Kaliph. If Muslim tries  
at the first the temper of the sword,  
then may the vicar of the Lord  
wield it himself in high emprise.  
Let me fare forth even unto Kufa  
and see what manner of men they be  
that tempt thee there with promises.

Restless as quicksilver Euphrates  
 craveth to meet thee ; all the lilies  
 of Kufa in thy absence scar ;  
 yea, though the whole of Kufa's country  
 be as a tulip field to see,  
 yet is all thorn without the light,  
 O Hosein, of thy countenance.  
 'Tis thus, O Hosein, that they write,  
 these men of Kufa, and they say :  
 " Behold ! unto us every day  
 pilgrims do come and cry : Perchance,  
 O men of Kufa, ye will deign  
 show us the threshold of that palace  
 scented with musk and ambergris,  
 where now the Imam Hosein is,  
 for of this honour we are fain—  
 to kiss the blessèd Imam's feet—  
 thus, oh, thus do the Kufans greet  
 the Imam Hosein." ' So departed  
 Muslim the martyr, and when he came  
 to Kufa straightway Ziad knew  
 where Muslim lay and seized and threw  
 Muslim and Hauni in the dungeon  
 of Ziad's palace, and fickle-hearted  
 the Kufans round the palace ragèd,  
 cried for the doves of Hosein cagèd.  
 But Ziad, since he knew not shame,  
 dragged the prisoners forth and there upon  
 the roof of the palace were beheaded  
 Muslim and Hauni, thus he did,  
 Ziad the governor of Kufa,  
 and thus the Kufan wrath assuagèd ;  
 and as it fell each martyr's head  
 hurled Ziad down into their midst,  
 and every way the Kufans wended,  
 their love for Hosein sudden ended.

Thus unto Hosein first thou didst,  
Yazid accursed.

Now troops of gloom  
invade the heart, the capital  
of Hosein's soul, for as Jamshid  
had once a cup wherein was limnèd  
the time to come, so now the doom  
that waits for Hosein on the morrow  
feels Hosein drawn in lines of sorrow  
upon his heart, yet what befell  
Muslim his cousin knows he not.  
And ever to Hosein letters brought  
from Kufa craved his presence there,  
nor spake a word of the murders done.  
Nay, Ziad's scribes writ: 'Hopes are fair  
and with thy presence all is won.'  
With fate for guide the great commander  
of the caravan of faith set forth  
and with him all his family  
and with him forty horsemen were  
and an hundred men that went on foot.  
Slowly they fare toward the north,  
Hosein the Imam by whose name  
the throne of God is raised on high,  
Abbas his brother, son of Ali,  
blossom of the meadow of the good,  
Leila his wife, that violet  
within the garden of modesty set,  
Zeinab his sister honey-lipped,  
yet in the sea of sorrow dipped,  
Kulsum his sister such another  
as Zeinab, for her sacred brother  
ready to strew with souls his path,  
Kasim the son of Hasan, cypress  
of the rose-garden of Ali's heart,  
Hasan his brother, he that is

of the eye of Ali chiefest part  
and Ali Akbar for companion  
upon his journey Hosein hath—  
red-robèd Joseph, nightingale  
of the rose garden of true sorrow—  
yea, Ali Akbar doth depart  
with Hosein, with his sire : ‘ For this  
were unto all men for derision,  
if while ye went, in Mecca I  
that well-nigh am a man should fail  
my destiny !’ And the bud unblown,  
that gemlike matchless little thing  
that only hath of laughter known,  
Sucana with her arms will cling  
round Hosein’s neck and ‘ Father !’ cry :  
‘ I thirst ! I thirst !’ and the Prophet’s ring  
shall be the only milk to her,  
save for the tears of Leila’s eye.  
These, ah ! these and more they were  
as they from Mecca forth did fare,  
and when they drew to Kufa nigh  
(within three stages Kufa lay . . )  
met they with Hûr and Hûr did cry :  
‘ O Imam Hosein, thy cousin Muslim  
two moons agoñe vile Ziad slew him,  
and thee he seeketh and would slay ;  
therefore be warned and turn and fly  
even to the gates of the holy city.’  
But Hosein answered him : ‘ O Hûr  
even if I would I may not fly,  
but with my family abide,  
yet if Ziad seeketh for my life  
well were it that I turn aside  
from the road to Kufa and endure  
as best I may, avoiding strife  
and seeking peace, since the Kufan men

have beckoned Hosein here in vain,  
for with their hearts they are for Hosein  
but with their hands would take his life.'  
Therefore he turned him to the Plain  
which is called Kerbela.

But on the morrow Hûr again  
came to the Imam and he said :  
' Son of the Messenger of God,  
if that a gnat his life may shed  
for a phoenix, then would Hûr even now  
die for the Lord of the seven<sup>1</sup> and four.'  
And Hosein answered him : ' Mayst thou  
whose name and deeds are as the sun<sup>2</sup>  
gain an thou willst the martyr's crown.'  
' The wings of the phoenix now are o'er  
my head,' cried Hûr : ' yea, I am Hûr,  
a tower of wisdom and a tower  
of strength, the Imam's champion ;  
yea, I am Hûr and by the Lord  
upon an army with this sword  
will the Imam's champion rush alone.  
Yea, I am Hûr and will endure  
the worst of the worst, of the best secure,  
for I have letters signed and sealed  
with the truth from the Imam's lips revealed,  
saved upon earth, in the world to come  
saved by the crown of martyrdom !'  
And on the morrow the sun arose  
pale, and he sent his trembling ray  
to quaver waver round the tent  
where with fair Leila Hosein lay,  
and as the lilies round the rose  
pale flapped the pearly tents of those  
whose scent doth mingle with the scent

<sup>1</sup> Eleven Imams according to Shiite tradition succeeded Ali.

<sup>2</sup> Khyr means sun in Persian.

which from the Prophet's garden blows.  
And on the plain afar drew near  
Amr son of Sad the conqueror,  
friend of the Prophet and the white  
banner of cursèd Yazid shook  
within his hand for sacred fear  
when he the deep green standard saw,  
and Hosein upon Amr did look  
as the day looketh on the night.  
And unto Amr had Yazid sworn  
to give the government of Rei  
for the bloody head of Hosein borne  
unto Damascus by the son  
of Sad belovèd of the Prophet.  
And twice two thousand men did stay  
the word of Amr as he came alone  
to the camp of Hosein and : ' O thou  
that art but two bows' length apart  
from the throne of God, O Imam Hosein,'  
spake Amr, ' think thou not evil of it  
that Amr the son of Sad must now  
lead thee a prisoner to the throne  
of Yazid.' But Hosein answered : ' Vain,  
O son of Sad, is this thy guile,  
I yield me not, but for a while  
if so thou willst I will remain  
here on the Plain while thou dost gain  
Kufa and thus to Ziad speakest :  
' O Ziad, Hosein that thou seekest  
waiteth with his at Kerbela.  
And if Yazid will unto the war  
Hosein will forth and bravely fight  
for Islam in the lands afar,  
or with his right hand in the right  
of Yazid speak, free man to free,  
or unto Mecca presently

return him with his family,  
 and tranquil there for ever bide." '

Thus unto Amr the son of Sad  
 Hosein the holy Imam spake,  
 and the words of Hosein Amr did take  
 unto the stony heart of Ziad,  
 (for though a weak and shivering reed  
 was Amr not wholly bad indeed,  
 and though for certain deep in hell  
 ever the son of Sad shall dwell,  
 yet must there place for Yazid be  
 for Ziad and him whose infamy  
 is such that spoken on the wind  
 breaketh its wings). And Ziad said  
 when Amr had given the message royal :  
 'To me thou comest without the head  
 of the Imam Hosein,' and did call  
 Shimar unto him (lo ! are broken  
 the wings of the wind and the name is spoken) :  
 'Get thee to Kerbela,' said Ziad,  
 'and be in the place of the Son of Sad.'  
 And unto Kerbela he went,  
 whose name I speak not willingly,  
 and when Hosein knew that Ziad sent  
 the man whose name is infamy,  
 already was the day far spent.  
 'And if thou wilt,' said Hosein, 'wait  
 till the morrow dawn'—and the man awaited,  
 since in the sunlight better sated  
 was his lust for the blood of the innocent.  
 And the night fell upon the Plain  
 and the Imam to his sisters spake,  
 to Zeinab and to Kulsum : 'Take  
 O well-belovèd, Ali Ashgar  
 and Leila with ye and Ali Akbar—  
 nay, do all of ye my family



with the rest fare back to the holy city,  
 since only for my blood is fain  
 Ziad. And no wise will he stay  
 your progress, nay, perchance take pity  
 and help ye helpless on your way.'  
 Then answered Leila: 'On thy lap  
 once more shall rest my head this night  
 and as the fragrant aloe wood  
 I care not if consumed quite  
 be all of Leila.' 'Ah! why should  
 thus speak the Imam,' answered Zeinab,  
 'unto his sisters, when to be  
 for the holy Imam sacrifice  
 is for them both felicity'—  
 and the others spake in kindred wise.  
 Then said the Imam: 'Heaven and sky  
 and man and all that is born shall die—  
 yea, they endure but for an hour—  
 all save the presence of God whose power  
 having made all things, all shall gather.  
 Better than Hosein was his father,  
 better his mother, better his brother,  
 and in the Prophet of God have they  
 and we ensample, and all of ye  
 that to the Plain have followed me.'  
 Thus the Imam spake and fell to pray  
 and having prayed, a trench they made  
 behind the camp and with wood they filled it  
 to burn on the morrow that thus be shielded  
 on the rear the army of the Imam.  
 And as the soldiers wrought Hosein  
 movèd alone across the plain  
 a little space and alone he was,  
 when on a sudden stood a horse,  
 a horse with a manlike countenance,  
 by the Imam's side and he spake: 'I am

unworthy even the dust to kiss  
 that 'neath thy holy sandals is.  
 Behold to-day with mind at ease  
 with nought of sad at all to tease  
 my kingly mind I sat alone  
 careless upon mine airy throne,  
 when on a sudden I heard a noise  
 and knew it for the Imam's voice  
 praying to heaven for assistance.  
 Therefore I come and those with me  
 make up a goodly company,  
 and if thou deignedst my allegiance,  
 upon thine enemies will I fall  
 and ere the Imam's eye shall glance  
 from earth to heaven shall they all  
 be vanquished utterly.' 'Who art thou?'  
 answered the Imam all amazed,  
 'that here the kindly fates have raised  
 to be for aid in my distress?'  
 'Jaffur King of the Jinn am I,'  
 answered the horseman, 'and a vow  
 have I made to do thee loyal service,  
 if that thou wilt it, here and now.  
 For in the past thy holy father  
 (blessed be his name, Murtaza Ali !)  
 did unto Tyar who was my father  
 a mighty service when the Jinn  
 were vanquished at the battle of Bair,  
 and unto Islam changèd were :  
 for then he made my father king.  
 Therefore but speak the word and I  
 will call from earth and air and sky  
 armies of Jinn invincible.'  
 Answered the Imam : 'Jaffur, nay,  
 that will I not, for treachery  
 were it if airy arrows slew

the men of Yazid, while from view  
hid was thine airy company,  
for verily the like warfare  
loveth not Allah nor his Imam,  
who upon earth even now I am.'

Made answer Jaffur : ' I implore thee,  
lord of the worlds of men and jinn  
leave me an hour to change my form in  
and as a man to stand before thee,  
yea, as a man I will return,  
and fight and fall for thee, and earn  
perchance such share of Paradise  
as for the best of the genii lies.'

Answered the Imam : ' None shall stay  
long in this caravanserai,  
which is the world, and on the morrow  
Hosein yon starry path shall follow.  
Therefore, O Jaffur, fare thee well,  
and mayest thou blessing and reward  
reap for thy kindness from the Lord.'

Slowly wearily up the skies  
trailed the sun with blood-red eyes  
upon the morrow since he craved  
vainly of Allah to be saved  
from such sad sight that veils of night  
should hide the Imam's sacrifice.  
And to the army of Amr the band  
of the Imam was as ten to a thousand.  
And to his father Ali Akbar  
spake, and he claimed by right of birth  
to be the first of heaven to profit.  
And the turban of the holy Prophet  
and the sword of Ali, Zul Fakar,  
hung from his belt of slender girth,  
and the coat of mail of his uncle Jaffar  
donned Ali Akbar and he bade

unto his family farewell,  
and as a waterfowl in water  
immersed in tears was Ali's daughter  
Zeinab, and Leila wept and said :  
' Shaped as a nest of nightingale,  
O Ali Akbar, was thy cradle ;  
how often have I watched night-long  
thy quiet slumber that no wrong  
should come unto my darling son.  
And now thou goest forth to die  
my eldest son, best lovèd one.'  
And the Imam said : ' God's will be done.'  
And Ali Akbar stood before  
the trenchèd camp and loud did cry  
his right illustrious ancestry,  
and his bright name, and then did draw  
the sword of Ali, Zul Fakar,  
and on the foe he fell and slew  
at the first encounter three, then two,  
then three, and seven times charged again,  
then turned him parchèd to the camp  
and cravèd water of his father.  
But the cursèd Yazid's squadrons stamp  
'twixt Hosein and Euphrates' tide  
(whose flood in saltèd tears would glide  
since not a drop could Akbar drain),  
and in the camp is no more water.  
Then said the Imam : ' I had rather  
know death ten times than see thee suffer,  
my son belovèd,' and distraught a  
means the poor Father prince of heaven  
sought, and a means to him was given :  
in the lips of his son his father's tongue  
placed he and moisture thence was wrung.  
With a last farewell then Akbar fell  
upon the foe and the son of Amr

struck him behind, and cut in pieces  
 with fifty swords was Ali Akbar  
 and every blow they struck meant hell  
 for every striker. And Hosein  
 wept tears of blood upon the Plain.  
 And Abbas, brother of Hosein cried,  
 unto the foe : ' Among what tribe is  
 custom that water be denied  
 unto the enemy ? Your horses,  
 your camels, and your elephants,  
 open to them the river's course is.  
 But unto Zahrah's<sup>1</sup> tribe, whose dower  
 was all Euphrates, is denied  
 a drop of water ! ' And Amr or he  
 whose name is written, ' Infamy,'  
 answered : ' No drop of water grants  
 Yazid unto ye till the hour  
 that ye surrender one ; ' and Abbas : ' Never  
 shall we surrender,' and he clove  
 the pates of twain that stood him by,  
 and striking left and right he strove  
 to gain Euphrates that he might  
 water the roses of the garden  
 whereof he was the chiefest warden  
 after the Imam, and on high  
 he bare the standard gallantly.  
 He fell and the next to be a martyr  
 was Hashim and the next was Kasim  
 the son of Hasan and his bride  
 was Fatima and thus she cried :  
 ' O Kasim, dear, our marriage-bed  
 see, in the grave it is outspread,  
 and I come to thee as a rose  
 blown on the autumn breezes goes.

<sup>1</sup> Zahrah, a term applied to Fatima, wife of Mohammad.

But Kasim, say, on the last day  
how shall I know thee among those  
that are around thee ?' And a murmur  
made answer unto Fatima :  
'Then shalt thou know me by the shroud  
wherein enveloped as a cloud  
the limbs of the bridegroom Kasim are.'  
Lamenteth Hosein thus : 'How dire  
now falleth heavy blow on blow  
upon my heart of the hammers of woe .  
Yea, Moses upon Sinai moaneth,  
and Jesus son of Mary groaneth  
knowing my state, for never fire  
within the breast may be concealèd  
but springeth forth in flame revealèd.  
O Solomon, leave Balkis' side  
since Kasim martyred leaves his bride ;  
and of its nest my heart the bird  
is plundered ; and, no sweeter thought  
than the rose the nightingale hath got ;  
and, when the frost hath killed the rose  
then is the bird's heart also froze.'  
And the angel Gabriel gazeth on  
the body of the martyr Kasim,  
and : 'On my soul be malison  
if standing thus so near beside him,'  
quoth Gabriel, 'can Gabriel tell  
whether he angel be or fairy.'  
Deep as the Imam thus lamenteth,  
behold the small Sucana runneth  
from Leila's tent, that lady of ladies,  
and with little parchèd lips of baby  
for a draught of water from her father  
craveth, but : 'Ah ! no water is  
for me to give thee, save from eye

filled with the wine of destiny,  
 answers the prince of thirsty lip :  
 ' There let thy small Sucana sip,'  
 pleadeth the child, and Hosein cries  
 to the Princess Leila, lady of ladies :  
 ' Within the tent perchance some shade is  
 unto Sucana ; lo ! I ride  
 to gain Euphrates and abide  
 not longer what shall now betide.'

Then on his steed he mounteth up,  
 and Leila and Zeinab and Kulsum  
 are weeping at the golden stirrup,  
 and in the breeze the pennon green  
 fluttereth as crowding round they come,  
 roses bereft of rosy garden.

In the one hand scrolls of Al Koran  
 beareth the Imam, in the other  
 graspeth the sword, Zul Fakar's brother.  
 And the Imam speaks : ' Thou God hast been  
 my confidence in every grief  
 and in adversity relief.'

Thereat he openeth Al Koran  
 that he may read therefrom, but lo  
 forth from the enemy's camp a squadron  
 gallopeth : be they friend or foe ?  
 and their chieftain crieth : ' I be Harro :  
 won ! the battle of faith is won  
 for me and for mine if with thee and with thine,  
 O holy Imam we may fight,  
 and to the fringe of thy cloak of green  
 cling as on mead of Paradise  
 thou walkest as thou shalt this night.'

Then the Imam answered : ' Thou hast seen  
 how heavy on the Imam lies  
 the hand of fate, but in Paradise  
 verily shalt thou walk this even,

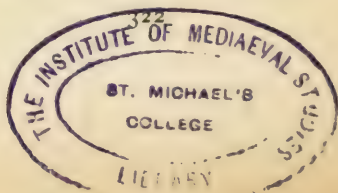


nor hold the Imam's cloak of green,  
 since that a cloak of heavenly sheen  
 by the hand of the Hûr Al Oyûn woven  
 unto each martyr shall be given.'  
 Thus as he spake there flew an arrow  
 from the opposite camp and a voice did cry  
 whose sound doth cause the inner marrow  
 melt in the bones : ' Bear witness I  
 Shimar have aimed at the son of Ali.'  
 (For though till now right near the strife  
 had been the Imam, all were awed  
 by the visible presence of the Lord.)  
 But with the shameful arrow's flight  
 rent was the veil which o'er the life  
 of Hosein as in Jewish shrines  
 over the holy of holies shines.  
 And with farewell to the weeping women  
 plunged the Imam in the thick o' the fight,  
 mounted on Zuljuna, his steed,  
 mowed of the Kufans many a weed.  
 Struck on the head with miscreant sword  
 unto his camp returned again  
 the visible image of the Lord.  
 And to his blood-stained breast he took  
 his little son, but an arrow strook  
 and slew in his arms the tender suckling,  
 and to his cloak did his nephew cling,  
 of golden curl and jewels were  
 bright in his shell-like probèd ear,  
 but with a sword the little hand  
 that held to him was cut and fell  
 (piteous it is thereof to tell)  
 where lay the corpse upon the sword.  
 And the Imam cried : ' We come from the Lord  
 and we return again to Him :  
 God grant me strength !' and to Hasan's son :

‘ Dear child, for this thy fallen limb  
in realms of bliss is thy reward  
with thy forefathers.’

And around  
crowd the enemy, where the very ground  
as a green meadow after rain  
with blood for water now doth run—  
blood of the infant innocent slain—  
and in the midst the Imam stands  
alone, and in his bleeding hands  
swings the great sword and Zeinab cries :  
‘ O Amr, canst thou behold the slaughter  
of the holy Imam ?’— and briny water  
trickles o’er Amr his shameful face  
as he turns to hide him from disgrace ;  
and the Imam springs upon the foe  
and all fall back for shame a space,  
and as a lion serpent-bitten  
standeth the Imam in his place.  
‘ Wherefore have none of ye now smitten  
Hosein, the prince of thirsty lip ?’  
crieth he of name unspeakable.  
‘ Behold will the son of Joshan shew  
the place to smite,’ and sunken down  
upon his knee in a half swoon  
was the blessèd Imam, and Shimar smote,  
and with the first blow struck did slip  
the sword from the murdered Hosein’s grip,  
and now the dagger finds his throat,  
and now he falleth in the dust,  
and as a mirror<sup>1</sup> from the rust  
so fadeth from the meadow of time  
Hosein the Imam most sublime.  
And as twin nightingales for one rose  
for Hosein mourn his sisters twain.

<sup>1</sup> Metal mirrors were used in the East.



Leila her veiling<sup>1</sup> tears and throws  
 and runs dishevelled o'er the plain,  
 and unto Hosein comes and cries :  
 ' Art thou then flown, my nightingale ?  
 nay, never so—nay, never so !  
 see where the heavenly smile yet flies  
 about thy large and dreaming eyes,  
 and from thy lips that are so pale  
 breathe forth eternal mysteries.'  
 Thus as she mourneth cometh he  
 whose name is written Infamy,  
 and from the body he cuts the head  
 even as a butcher, and calleth on  
 galloping squadron upon squadron,  
 and to and fro and to and fro  
 pound they, gallop they every way,  
 that of the Imam not a shred,  
 saving his hyacinth curlèd head,  
 mortal again may ever know.  
 But the head upon an halbert spike  
 impaleth he that he may shew  
 unto his cursèd master Yazid,  
 which when he seeth doth Yazid strike  
 ferociously upon the mouth  
 with his whip and asketh : ' Is thy drouth  
 departed, prince of the thirsty lip ?  
 if not, behold, thou mayest sip  
 even from the Kaliph Yazid's cup.'  
 And an ancient Arab riseth up  
 and to the tyrant Yazid crieth :  
 ' Softly, O Kaliph, for mine eyes  
 have seen upon his lips thou striketh  
 the lips of the Apostle of God.'

. . . . .  
<sup>1</sup> For a woman to do this betokened her being so distracted  
 with grief that she had lost her senses.

What of the mourning sisters twain  
Zeinab and Kulsum on whose bosom  
sleeping the small Sucana lies ?  
Naked and chained with a chain  
over all Araby must they fare  
unto Damascus prisoners led ;  
and ever before the Imam's head  
moves as a beacon of despair.  
What of the last male of the race,  
the little Ali, Ali the less,  
son of the Imam and of Leila ?  
Chained is the stripling with a chain  
and with his sisters prisoners  
unto Damascus must he fare,  
but not a syllable doth he deign  
unto his brutal captors utter  
though of his discourse be they fain,  
for though a child, full well he knoweth  
his glorious ancestry and showeth  
by holding silence his disdain.  
What of widowed Leila, Persia's daughter ?  
behold the prince of Persia sought her,  
and mounted upon Zuljuna  
safe from all infamy he brought her  
unto her home within Madain.

Thus of the Plain of Kerbela  
where of the Family of the Cloak,  
of the Family of the Cloak of green,  
fell around Hosein seventeen.  
Right fain would Yazid deal the stroke  
which the last lilies of the meadow  
should sever at a single blow,  
yet dare not, and the three return  
even unto Mecca, and the sight  
of the lilies three that flame doth kindle

which waxeth ever and spreadeth west  
 as a dragon moves with fiery crest,  
 and now doth all of Persia burn,  
 which waxeth ever and spreading east,  
 doth lick the throne of the braying<sup>1</sup> beast  
 yea, waxeth ever nor shall dwindle  
 until reduced to ruin crashes  
 the house of Ommeya burned to ashes  
 for Hosein murdered on the Plain.  
 Thus of the Family of the Cloak,  
 their fate upon earth hath the prophet<sup>2</sup> spoke,  
 but of the time to come—that day  
 when the heaven and the earth shall pass away—  
 yet a word will I whisper in your ear.  
 Lo ! when the angel Gabriel  
 shall have bid the angel Sarafil  
 blow the last trump, as a pearly shell  
 the earth shall open and yield her dead.  
 And near and far and far and near—  
 patriarchs, prophets, saints, and sinners,  
 must they approach the Judgment-seat.  
 And the patriarchs are the beginners,  
 and lo, their hearts are filled with dread  
 and their bodies burn for the mighty heat.  
 Now first behold where Abraham riseth  
 and to the Lord his Friend<sup>3</sup> he crieth :

<sup>1</sup> Merwan II. reigning Kaliph of all Islam in Damascus at this date, circ. 746 of our era.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.*, the masked speaker.

<sup>3</sup> In time of famine Abraham sent to beg flour of a friend in Egypt. His servants, failing of their mission, filled the sacks with white sand. Sarah, unaware of this incident, opened one of the sacks and found good flour. Abraham, having previously known of the failure of the mission, fell into a deep sleep. Awakening, he smelt new bread, and asked Sarah whence she had procured flour. 'From your friend in Egypt,' she said. 'Nay,' said Abraham, 'it must have come from my friend God Almighty.'

'Abraham, Lord, thy Friend, I am :  
 See, Lord, I burn, have mercy on me—  
 but to my son, to Ishmael  
 do Thou, O Lord as seemst Thee well.'  
 And to the Lord shall Ishmael cry :  
 ' Burning, O Lord, a-burning I ;  
 do Thou, O Lord, unto my sire  
 what seems Thee good, but quench my fire.'  
 Lo ! Jacob riseth from the grave,  
 and : ' Save me, merciful Lord, O save,  
 for lo, I scorch, but unto Joseph  
 do Thou as to Thee well beseemeth ;'  
 and of his father Joseph speaketh  
 even as Ishmael of his.  
 What ruddy countenanced King is this ?  
 Hark ! now he crieth : ' I be David :  
 O Lord I burn ! O Lord be kind,  
 even as of old to Thy servant David,  
 but the throne of Solomon, let the wind  
 bear it wherever Thou shalt bid.'  
 Solomon crieth : ' Lord upon  
 King David let thy will be done,  
 but upon me, O Lord, have mercy,  
 that was the wise King Solomon.'  
 Thus shall they speak, each patriarch,  
 but hark to the voice of Gabriel, hark !  
 ' O thou the Prophet that sitt'st alone,  
 above the Lord, His vasty throne,  
 deign thou, I prithee, from Paradise  
 some steps to take and grant the boon  
 to bring with thee thine orbèd moon  
 Ali.' And to the Prophet cries  
 Ali : ' May I a ransom be,  
 Sovereign of religion, unto thee.  
 Raise up even now thy voice to praise  
 the one Lord absolute, then be seated

within the place of the mediator,  
then let the angelic register  
speak forth the sins of every sinner  
that unto each his pain be meted.'   
Then shall the Prophet of God upraise  
his voice and speak : ' Be praise to Thee,  
O Lord, from all eternity,  
standard of glory and of praise,  
praise be to Thee that hath thought well  
to appoint Paradise to the good  
and to the evil-doer Hell !  
Lo ! the reward of good is good.'   
Then shall the sinners come and cry  
unto the Prophet : ' O have pity  
upon thy people, for we burn,  
O thou the messenger of God !'  
And unto Ali : ' 'Tis the day  
of intercession : rend we pray  
O Ali, lion of God's wood,  
thy garments, Ali ; come and turn  
from us the flames that burn, that burn !'  
And the Prophet shall cry to the Lord : ' Have mercy  
on this my people that have trod  
the way of sinners, yet have mercy,  
O Lord, on these that followed me !  
O Lord, have mercy ! Lord, have mercy !'  
And Ali crieth loud : ' Have pity  
O Lord, on these Thy Prophet's people !'  
But to the Prophet Gabriel  
shall speak : ' O Prophet, it were well  
if to some very distant place  
ye did withdraw, for if with fire  
burned are thy sinful people's bodies,  
yet this the judgment just of God is  
and all as nought to the burning mace,  
to the torments whereunto this fire



is as a paradise.' But the Prophet  
 shall hurl away his cloak and rod,  
 aye, and his turban, for 'No profit  
 of these hath the Apostle of God,'  
 shall cry Mohammad, 'when in dire  
 damnation all my people burn !'  
 Yea, then the Prophet of God shall spurn  
 mantle and rod and turban green.  
 But Gabriel crieth : 'Take, O Prophet,  
 thy cloak and rod and turban green  
 unto thee, for a means, I ween,  
 remaineth yet whereby to raise  
 thy followers from those flames that blaze.  
 If that thou wilt now to save  
 thy people, from his sandy grave,  
 call Hosein forth from Kerbela.'  
 Hear the Prophet cry : 'Arise, O Ali !  
 beat mournfully upon thy head !  
 O Fatima let thy prayer be said,  
 best among women ! let him rise  
 Hosein, the light of the Prophet's eyes !'  
 And hark how loud his people cries :  
 'Ya ! Hasan ! Hosein ! Hosein ! Shah !  
 we sinners yet thy people are !'  
 And Fatima unto Kerbela,  
 and Ali unto Kerbela,  
 and Hasan from his grave arisen  
 shall fare forth unto Kerbela.  
 And to her son shall Fatima cry :  
 'Come forth, my dearest, from thy prison,  
 come ! 'tis thy mother Fatima ;  
 come ! thou wilt not her prayer deny.'  
 And from his grave shall Hosein come,  
 and : 'Mother dear thy voice I hear,'  
 shall Hosein answer ; 'be I ransom  
 O mother for thy voice remembered.

But see, O mother, stuck all over  
with arrows now and all dismembered  
once was my body, come together  
since that it is the Judgment Day.'

'Would that again thy mother went  
beneath the earth in such sad state  
to see thy body delicate !

O Hosein mine, but thy reward  
hast thou,' quoth Fatima, 'of the Lord.  
Behold ! 'tis given thee to relieve  
those that in thee and in thy sire  
and in the Prophet did believe,  
yet are consumèd with hell fire.'

Then to his son shall Hosein cry :  
'Come forth my son ! come Ali Akbar !  
bring with thee Hûr, Abbas, and Jafar,  
Kasim and Muslim : all that are  
equally martyrs for the faith.'

Then robed in robes of green shall stand  
the Family of the Cloak together.

See now where Gabriel coming saith :

'With a message from the Lord come I !

Behold ! the Key of Paradise

I place, O Prophet, in thy hand.

Of all men, none hath suffered ever

as Hosein, none hath e'er obeyed

in all things in his faithful service

as Hosein, lo, the key that is

within thy hand I give for prize

to Hosein, him whom I have made

the mediator unto all

thy people.'

Then shall the Prophet call  
joyfully unto the Imam Hosein :

'O Hosein, see what thou dost gain !—  
to set our people free from pain !

Go thou and set those sinners free  
 who in their lives one tear for thee  
 have shed, who have in any way,  
 O Hosein, been to thee for stay,  
 who ever did their steps engage  
 unto thy shrine in pilgrimage  
 or mourned for thee, or poesy  
 writ once in tragic words of sorrow :  
 take thou the key and set them free.'

Then shall the Imam open wide  
 the pearly gates and loud shall call :  
 ' Come all of ye that yestertide  
 did weep, to-day is as to-morrow,  
 yea, now to all eternity  
 is joy, and rest, and peace for all.'

Thus the Imam maketh intercession  
 at the Judgment Day for many a nation.  
 O Lord, I pray let thy curse be on  
 Omar and Abou Bekr and Othman,  
 usurpers all, and on Muavia,  
 Amrou and Abul Aur and Walid,  
 and Abdul Rahman the son of Khalid,  
 but above all accursed be Yazid  
 for that thy sacred blood he shed  
 upon the plain of Kerbela."

Thus the mask of gold his discourse ended,  
 and from the marble court he wended,  
 and as he went some cried : " Behold !  
 'tis Antichrist," and others, " Nay !  
 'tis the Prophet's self come back to hold  
 true discourse ere the Judgment Day."

'Twas thus, with curses and with blessings  
 that the masked prophet went his way,  
 nor did any dare his course to stay,  
 for terror held them, till Zobeir  
 rose in his place and : " Reasonings,"

quothe he, "with one so mad as he  
methinks were vain, else easy were  
to shew the Persian how well able  
to change true histories to fable.  
Certès had great Muavia scorned  
Hasan, the many-wivèd prince,  
to slay with poisoned treachery.  
Nay, of some wifely jealousy  
died Hasan, and Muavia mourned  
Hasan and fain had the murderess punished,  
but knew not which of many, since  
so heavy is the harem's shade.  
Hosein the prince whereto they cry,  
these Persians, as to God on high!  
And the men of Mecca rave and scream:  
'Hasan! Hosein!' behold they dream.  
Nought was Hosein but a vain pretender  
unto the throne of the Kaliphate,  
whereof his brother made surrender  
unto the great Muavia,—  
and his father Ali bowed to fate,  
nor waged war on Syria  
after the last, the great decision  
at Duma whereof I have spoken.  
But as for Hosein's treason one  
drave him thereto whereof the name  
is as the speaker's writ the same,—  
Zobeir, and the Kufan's pledges broken  
were broken well and this the reason:  
to keep those pledges had been treason.  
Ziad and Shimar, shameless pair,  
outstrode the will of the Kaliph Yazid  
who ne'er ordained the crimes they did  
at Kerbela, and when were brought  
Zeinab and Kulsum to Damascus,  
Yazid the Kaliph spake them fair

and ever afterwards he sought  
 their welfare, and for proof he sent  
 both back unto the holy city  
 with their brother's child, the lesser Ali,  
 hight now the ornament of the pious  
 by the Persian upon worship bent.  
 But of our rulers what he told  
 is as a face in a hollow mirror  
 reflected round and fatly rolled  
 or lengthwise drawn and ever thinner,  
 made by the trickery of art  
 to mock the truth and turn the heart  
 from the right path of reverence due  
 to the house of Ommeya ; and of all  
 he muttered of a war to come  
 is the last word from Persia dumb ;  
 aye, never further from its fall<sup>1</sup>  
 than now our mighty house which grew  
 from the grey mule Muavia.  
 And since he curseth, hear Zobeir :  
 Lord, I beseech thee, blessed be Omar,  
 and Abou Bekr and the murdered Othman,  
 verily blessèd these three are,  
 and blessèd be Muavia.  
 Lord, I beseech thee, cursed be Ali  
 and Ashtar, Othman's murderer,  
 Abbas and Hasan and Hosein,  
 and cursèd be the last again,  
 well killed upon the Persian plain—  
 well killed and yet that will not lie,

<sup>1</sup> Zobeir is wrong here and the masked prophet right. The  
 Ommyad Kaliphate was overthrown three years later by the  
 Abbâssids at the battle of Zab in 749. The Abbâssids slew every  
 descendant of Ommya, save one, who fled to Spain, where he  
 established a dynasty. The Abbâssids were collaterals of the  
 Fatimites (Hosein's family) being descended from the Prophet's  
 uncle. The first Abbâssid Kaliph was fifth in this descent.

but riseth ever up in vain  
to spot our Yazid's memory."

Thus ended Zobeir, and the faint  
white light of dawn was in the east  
and the starry listeners grown dim,  
and the doves about the palm-trees flitting  
new with the day as the Christian saint  
bowed to Zobeir and thanked him  
for rest and respite and the feast.  
"And ere I pass away 'tis fitting,"  
quoth the saint, "that a word of blame from me  
fall heavy on the blasphemy  
of the figure in the mask of gold.  
Now harken all! what he hath told  
of the Prince Hosein and the Judgment Day  
and the key of Paradise and fire  
that burns the patriarchs and the ire  
of the Most High, but most the fable  
of intercession, angereth me.  
Behold! 'tis evident blasphemy:  
Yea, from the Christ hath the Persian stolen."  
But the man of Ind uprose and smiling  
quoth: "Let us each be charitable,  
O saint of Christ, for were thy fable  
once from its yellow robes unfolden,  
methinks not more there would remain  
of Christ than of the Prince Hosein  
in the seamless robe in Heaven hiding,  
though verily the robe were green.  
Therefore let cease thine ardent chiding,  
and know that many a Christ hath been  
yea, many a Christ and Prince Hosein,  
and many such shall be again.  
But higher shall that Christ uprise  
who knows there is not Paradise,

nor heaven nor hell for man to gain  
save by himself and so shall teach  
the eightfold path of truth to each  
which leadeth to that shoreless sea  
where from the dream of self set free  
shall the blessed be yet cease to be  
as mortals willing, wishing, sinning,  
joying and sorrowing and beginning :  
merged in Nirvana utterly."

Thus the Man of Ind began and ended  
and bowing low to both he wended  
even as the rhinoceros

his way amid the jungle goes  
past the tinkling fountain and the faces  
of those that filled the marble spaces  
toward the bottom of the court.

And the saint rose up again and blessed  
Zobeir for all and took farewell :

"For," said he, "Zobeir by thee,  
old friend, is Mansour happy brought,  
his penance purged, his body rested,  
his soul perchance from pains of hell  
saved ;" and Zobeir embraced and bade  
farewell to the friend in such strange wise  
met in Damascus in strange guise  
and freely offered all he had  
unto his friend—his slaves and horses—  
to bear him to the Laura back.

"Nay," said the saint, "the monk his course is  
step by step on the stony track."

And down the marble court he wended  
and the Meeting of the Creeds was ended.

For Zobeir rose up from his place  
and to the inner palace hied  
and the listeners through the porch did glide  
into the street and for a space



save the tinkling fount and the doves that cooed  
all was a marble solitude.

. . . . .  
With the morrow's dawn St. John did win  
back to the Laura, purged of sin,  
and Isumbrand full soon within  
the solemn aisles of the chapel lies,  
and the same dirge the monks make rise  
to waft his soul upon its way  
as made St. John upon a day,  
and those be smiles about their eyes  
as for St. Isumbrand they pray.

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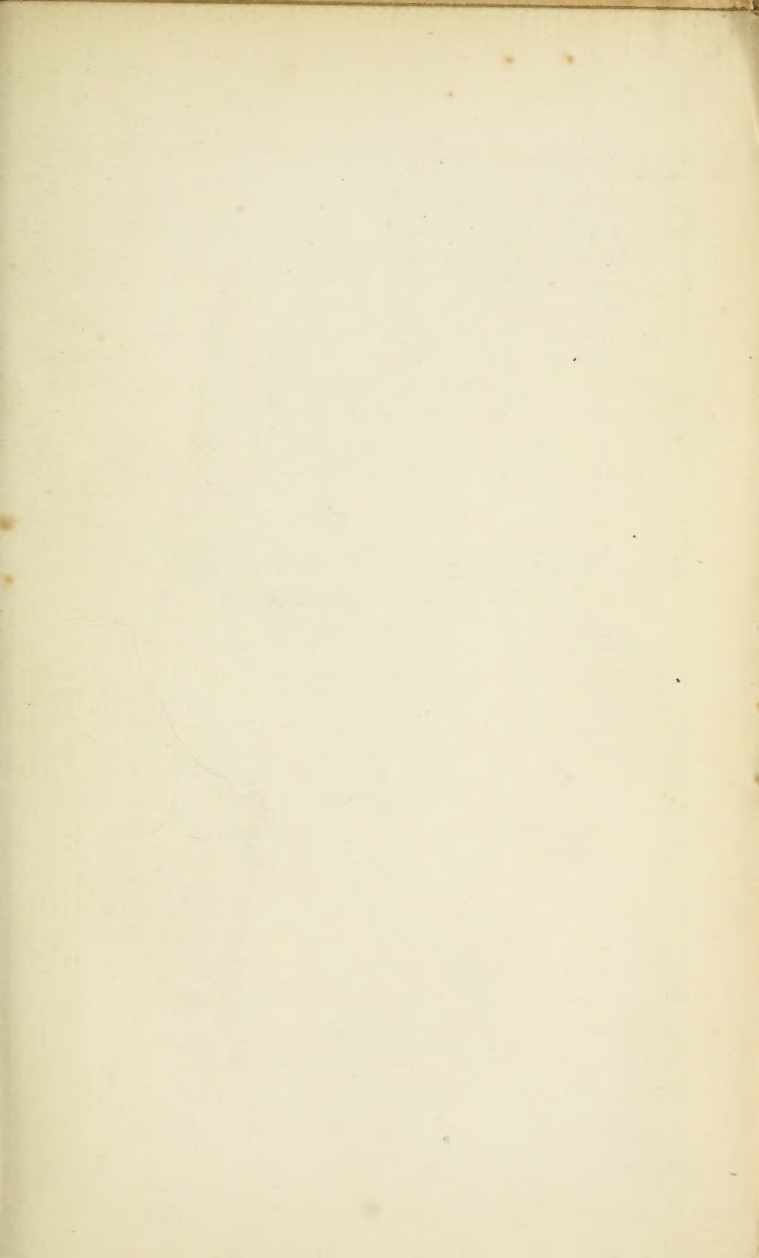
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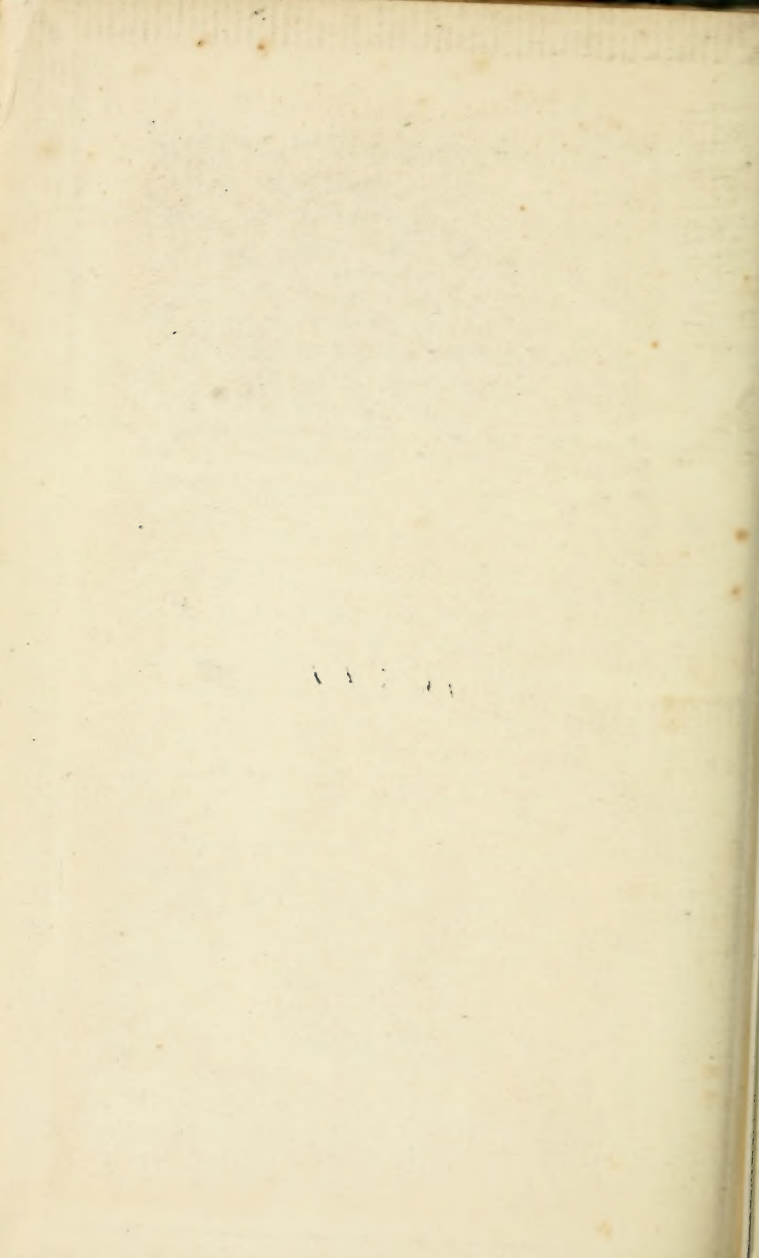
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